

A CHRISTIAN GNOSIS

PHILLIP MEDHURST

**"This is eternal life:
to know thee who alone art truly God,
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."**

The Gospel according to John, chapter 17 verse 3

for
Robert Medhurst
(Aaron, son of Abraham and Sarah)
1944 - 2012

PROLOGUE: GENESIS

The Gnosis issued forth, and stood at once
In rank with Forethought, born to mother true,
Who by her wish had helped to bring him forth.
The One whose sight blinds mortal eye was glad
To see effulgent fruit swell on His bough,
And He anointed him with chrism pressed
From His own goodness, and from His own store
Of overflowing virtue's essence, pure.
And thus endowed, he waited on his source,
And added to the glory that no eye
Can see of his progenitor, and His
Prevenient grace, the matrix of the All.

And Gnosis asked for Truth. The One agreed,
And swift on His consent that Truth came forth,
And joined the heavenly rank of all who dwell
As mind ineffable. But Truth would speak,
And so the Word then issued forth and joined
The sphere in which Truth lives and moves and has
Its being. And from that Word, imbued with Light
And Life, came what could turn a Word to Deed.
By active Word, Sophia came to be.

But she desired a thing exclusive to
Herself. This thought was not inert, and so
It reified: short of perfection, shorn
Of that ideal beauty typical
Of her who gave him birth, a thwarted clone
Of one true-born of heavenly gene and stock,
All self-engendered, selfishly conceived.
The One had not engaged or wed with her
In union divine; no spouse or sire
Had courted her consent, no nuptial bliss
Had blessed the product of chaste amity;

For what she willed was without conference
Of family, or consummation of
Conjugal love; concupiscence instead,
Without relationship, a fantasy impure,
And alien to the hymns its Mother sang
When in accord with her pure ancestry.
In this her wish came true: a monster formed,
A snake with lion-jaws and eyes that blazed
With horrid fire of self-will. She cast
It out, beyond the zone of purity
Where he might not be seen by all her peers:
From Wisdom born, in ignorance to dwell.
She gave her child a name, as it befits
A ruler who inherits a great power:
It is Ialdabaoth, matter's prince.
Ialdabaoth strutted forth, and marched
From place to place, far from the place where he
Was born. And annexing still more he formed
Self-glorifying spheres of fire that still
Flare on unto this day in heaven's dome.

The tyrant raised his hand – his arrogance –
And masturbated, got Authorities,
Egged on by fantasies of unknown realms.
And as Sophia's light within him shone
And gave him unique power: because of this
He blasphemously called himself a god.
So he created seven Angels, each with Powers
Sufficient for a year of days, and all
In mimicry of that intuited
From what was long before. But those whom he
Begot, those children of the ignorance
And dark, lacked intimation of the source
And principle from which all things had come.
A week of angels this way rules the world,
For Ialdabaoth, who is Saklas, has

A multitude of faces, more than all,
So he can show himself in any face,
Just as he wills. He shares his nature with
Them – ev’rything except the pristine power
That he drew from his mother, Wisdom: that
He would not share. This made him cosmic lord,
Conferring – as he thought – divinity
Upon his minion powers. And their "god"
Gave each a place to dwell, a so-called "heaven".
Their urge to rule instilled makes them believe
That they are gods; but Truth is not deceived:
Their bestial natures are revealed to those
Who know. Their god-like attributes are part
And parcel of a fantasy dreamed up
By Saklas; but illusion will not have
Its way – except with those who dwell within
The dream. The light of Truth will chase away
The fog, dissolve its shifting, swirling shapes
Which scare all the deceived like flimsy masks
Pinned onto wind-puffed cloaks. Such images
Invoke some dread reality, from which
They draw their fearful influence and power.
And so it was with these, for Saklas shaped
His schemes upon a kind of memory
Of what he had experienced in the womb
Of what is truly real. And when he saw
The world he had created all laid out,
And gazed upon the panoply which he
Had spun, enveloping his nakedness,
His tongue clapped in his bell, and said:
"I am a jealous god. There is no god
But me." And so in his stupidity
He gave the game away, and told his friends
There was a God who spurned "Divinity" –
The title of this insane jealousy.

The Mother then became aware of her
Deficiency, and how her light had dimmed.
For when she saw her blemishes within
The light of the Pleroma, she then drew
Across her face a veil of darkness: she
No longer could return her consort's smile
Without deception, and be unabashed.
Her holy fear caused her to hover at
The gate of Truth, unable to go in.
For when her offspring in his arrogance
Had taken power from his Mother, he
Was ignorant of any provenance
And thought her womb was all that there had been.
Infatuated with his handiwork,
He placed himself upon a pedestal,
An idol to himself.

And so she turned;
And so was heard in her humility.
For now she knew what kind of thing he was,
And how he lacked perfection's symmetry.
Up to her source she raised her tear-filled eyes.
He gave the consent, and so a healing flood
Of cleansing holiness washed over her
To make her whole; for Providence agreed
To supervise her in austerity
Within a place of penance set aside
Beyond carnality and snares of sin,
Where she could re-acquire her modesty.

And then a voice came forth: "Behold the Man!"
And when the chieftain of the Powers heard
He had no inkling of from whence it came.
At once, however – ignorant or not –
They were aware – to their damnation – that
There was a holy, perfect Source above:

The Mother-Father, Parents who brought forth
All that there is, and whose beneficence
Was now displayed in dazzling Anthropos.

A shiver went through Ialdabaoth's world,
And rippled through its fundamental sands.
And in the sky the purest element,
Transfigured by the bright epiphany,
Revealed that Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth.
And so the carnal gang beheld a light
Infuse the cavern of the world below.
Their eyes were opened, and they saw revealed
The shimmering glory of the Son of Man.

The upstart god addressed his fawning clan:
"Come let us make a thing like what we saw
To give some aim and purpose to our plans."
So each and every one of them then gave
A little something from his psychic pouch,
And made an entity from out themselves,
Each adding layer on layer of plastic stuff,
Along the lines of what they had just seen.
Thus a reflection creaturely became,
And looked just like the sole original –
The perfect Anthropos. And then they said,
"Now let us call him Adam, that his name
May light our high road to imperium."
And so this wondrous work, this body came
About – not yet of flesh, but harbouring
A vital force that tapped the secrets of
Their universe, their sevenfold harmony,
Encapsulated microcosmically
In sense and a potential agency.
And yet there was something in short supply:
The thing had no vocation to fulfil,
And thus no will to try, and lay inert.

No aspiration graced that dawning day.
Sophia wanted to retrieve the power
Which she had given to her bastard son.
In innocence she came and humbly asked
The Mother-Father of transcendent All
Who is most merciful. And He decreed
That Gnosis should go down to that cold place
Where ignorance prevails.

Elsewhere, within
The stony hearts of all the Powers the weed
Of envy sprang. Their flaws exposed by this
Wise luminosity, they cast the Man
Into a pit, heaped on him all their dung,
The heavy execrescence of their days.
So Adam came within the mortal sphere,
Coiled there and then of base material,
Engendered from desire within the dark,
Enlivened by a soul-less breath, mere air.
Thus was our fetter forged, our dungeon made,
By which these bandits now enslaved the Man,
Who, in the darkness, soon forgot the light
And grew accustomed to the stench of death.

And then Heimarmene was made, so that in time
The cruellest jailer shackled all his being,
With an array of manacles and chains
Called times and seasons, moments, ages, dates,
Those fetters from which none could be exempt
Outside the All, nor gods nor mortal men,
Now doomed to live within a space of time
That was the past, or will be days to come –
But never now, the present never seized,
With minds obsessed with what will be and what
There might have been, with schemes and plans
stretched to

Infinity, but that eternal now
Beyond their ken. And hence the consciousness
Of the Beyond eluded Man again.

And furthermore he was engenderised,
By which the husband, stronger than the wife
In limb, for males might claim a spiritual
Domain irrelevant to Truth derived
From high authority – for Saklas knew
He must divide and rule.

So in due course
Two sons were born, and Cain and Abel named;
And thanks to Saklas, human creatures were
Endowed with seed to replicate themselves,
The carnal and the psychic; one inspired
By wind, the other by Sophia's ghost.
Meanwhile, within a bower of Life the Man
Called Adam met the Woman Eve, and each
Encount'ring each within their very core
Begot the Son of Man called Seth, the True.
This son and all his offspring, blessed by those
On high, are called to dwell in heaven's courts,
And taught to trace their names inscribed upon
The scroll of Life, while monuments to flesh
Collapse, their epitaphs erased. For those
Who truly live cannot abide the dark:
They must illumine all the catacombs
Where the enlightened have been forced to dwell,
And lead them to the sunlight up above.
Thus shall the righteous gather, and assist
Each other on the way, that true mankind
Might find its rightful place within the All,
And holiness, made whole, might be complete.

APHORISMS

1. The world is a place of wounds. Wounds to the spirit bleed venom in the soul. Staunch the flow of venom into a poisoned world.
2. Pay heed to the words of those whom men call "Saviour" and "Enlightened" – provided that they help you towards liberation.
3. Beware The Powers. Their subtlety enables them to invade every corner of the universe, and turn even the most opulent of gifts into an engine of slavery.
4. Beware those who claim detachment, but are in fact disaffected. Spurned lovers of the world, they gladly return to her arms if beckoned.
5. Beware answers. Beware guides. Beware The Powers, whose gifts are snares. Beware leaders of men. Beware schemes and systems. Beware rewards and punishments. Beware the world.
6. Suffer much, say little, understand all.
7. The will to power manifests itself in hierarchies, systems, strange terminologies, and all the paraphernalia which gives the pilgrim cause to stumble. Beware such "gnosis" and its occult science.
8. The way to salvation is through transcendence of the self. This may be through thought or action. Transcend the will to power and thus find freedom.

9. In your heart is a hungry worm that grows until your heart is gone, then feeds upon itself. Trust what your heart tells you, yet deny it. Sharpen your wit, then throw it away. Exercise your mind, then let it be at rest. Welcome the paradox, but do not worship it. Our world was made by Samael. We name the parts with the tongue he gave. His is the Word, but his is not the Truth.

10. Understanding is obscured by the delirium brought on by wealth, power, or worldly beauty. Those who sit in judgment always find for themselves. Seek The Spiritual Man, therefore, among those whom the world condemns. The man who turns his back on the rewards of this world must also bare it to stripes.

11. Bend beneath the blows of The Powers, and so avoid hurt.

12. You sift the dust for tiny nuggets of truth. But you stare at the ground because you walk on all fours. Raise your head above the earth and look to the stars, where you may contemplate the Wisdom already known to you.

13. Forgive! – know the cause of injurious deeds, or your heart will be a worm that feeds upon itself.

14. Do not suppose that spiritual status is in any way related to worldly accomplishments. Behold the crippled idiot who leads men to The Truth! Behold the man of intellect and prowess who uses the gifts of nature to extend his sty!

15. There are those who deny the gods, but few can escape The Powers. Refusing to enter the labyrinth of

deception, they bivouac in the vestibule. Rejecting the greater gods of the Temple, they fall prey to the meaner gods of the hearth. Clear the grime from the window and gaze on the world outside.

16. Let the mind of Carnal Man be leavened by the powers-that-be to feed the self. We instead share the simple fare of detachment as we journey together to The Truth.

17. Be compassionate. To understand folly is to forgive.

18. These are not "revelations". These are rather messages from my true self to my true self witnessed by the rest of the world. They are Gnosis made Word, and the waters that are drawn from this well will quench the thirst of many.

19. Sacrifice on the altar of matter is in vain. Yet perhaps Sophia has a place to which her carnal offspring are destined.

20. The Gnostic will not run with the herd or the pack; the wrath of The Archons is therefore inflamed.

21. Those who know say least. But for those who share in the nature of The One there is eternity.

22. The Spirit suffers in flesh the enmity of The Powers. Our souls cry out at injury to the flesh, but these injuries dissolve with the flesh that gave them birth. None are victims of "evil". All are victims of the world.

23. The fool creates patterns of cause and effect – the fat are blessed, the lean are cursed – then traces all to "God". But the fat are not praiseworthy; the lean are not to blame.

24. When Ialdabaoth made the cannibal coil within eternity, it was on the basis of laws neither right nor wrong.

25. Without map, without scrip, without shoes, some arrive before they set out. The land is theirs; they are the kingdom.

26. All things rise from and fall into the dust, with a beauty that cannot be seized.

27. Decay is part and parcel of the material world: ideas decay; beliefs decay. These things do not matter to The Spiritual; neither does it matter if, over aeons of time, The Truth is buried. Indeed, at times The Truth should be prepared for burial.

28. Wisdom can never be seen by all; the quest is in vain.

29. The One can only be perceived by those who share by their very natures in The Transcendent Reality.

30. The Truth is not to be discovered through any personal relationship – for the root of all bonding of separates is carnal. Only pure Knowledge saves: the Knowledge that knows itself by itself, uncontaminated by affection.

31. There is no appeal to reason here; there is only an appeal to Knowledge. Those who know will recognise what they know: argument is unnecessary.

32. The issue is freedom. "Show us the one who brings freedom", you demand. I can not. Only The One knows The One. The One trapped in flesh seeks liberation, and finds a path. The slave dreams of becoming the master. Yet the master is also a slave. The true goal is to transcend the will to power and so find freedom.

33. For The Spiritual Man "salvation" is not an issue. The spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion. The issue is liberation. The means of liberation is Knowledge.

34. Can the unborn child picture its birth? Can The Spiritual imagine the freedom which will be theirs?

35. No "God" will release his slaves. His chains are subtle. They are forged with fear. And the anger of his priests is unbounded against those who will not accept his manacles. For the priest is a slave who dreams himself master; awake from all dreams and you will be free.

36. Through Knowledge, The Spiritual Man will avoid that which makes thickens the prison walls. And he will turn his gaze to he window, and the stars beyond, and see what his captors, to their perpetual rage, will never see.

37. Spurning the vows of the devotee, they make their pledge to wealth, family and status. They hear the roar

of the beast and serve it. We are called to slay it, and to press on to the gate that leads to Life.

38. Ialdabaoth has a multitude of colours, and can present foliage according to his desire. And yet he is a stump. His branches decay, his fruit is rotten.

39. Can all men be saved? – The Carnal and The Psychic will always worship The Archons. (The Spiritual Man may also be seduced along this path). These powers, including the demiurge, are but the vices of such men elevated to a principle.

40. You entertain a doubt that the alleged powers and the supposed path of liberation exist only in the mind. How can this be so? If the mind of man is a product of nature, is it not impressed with the shape of things from outside itself? Admire The Powers, and spurn them. Never underestimate them: their vigour is real.

41. The Carnal, ever limited by their nature, see only idols that may gratify their manifold needs.

42. The lips of the messenger are frozen in stone.

43. The bellies of The Carnal need leavened bread.

44. Those most committed to the illusion, and who fail to grasp the true nature of things, succeed in the eyes of the world.

45. That which overturns matter is seen as a destroyer by those in thrall to The Powers.

46. Though there is more than one path, there is only one goal: transcendence of "self".

47. The Spiritual meets enlightenment as logos, The Psychic as mythos.

48. To leave the womb is to escape a grave. To abandon security is to leave death behind.

49. The slave dreams of becoming the master. Yet the true goal is to transcend the will to power and so find freedom.

50. The Gnostic "revelation" is provisional – a celebration of the riches of The Truth in currency whose value fluctuates, and much of which is base metal. No-one has a monopoly when it comes to the manner in which the truth is expressed.

51. The three human kinds exist because of the way that the universe has come about, and not by election.

52. Gems of Truth may be lodged in poor settings.

53. Your "good" is self-serving, your "morality" an instrument of prey.

54. The Carnal is the world. The Psychic perceives a world. The Spiritual knows a prison.

55. Being order in matter, Ialdabaoth's is the Word.

56. Notions of "good" are corrupted by consideration of the provisional, the transitory, the self-serving. Yet there is a kind of "good". That which tends towards The One is "good" because it tends to what is real.

57. The virtue of The Spiritual Man is detachment, and this leaves no mark for the eyes of the world to behold.

The Spiritual Man does not pursue wealth, so all the world sees is poverty. The Spiritual Man does not pursue power, so all the world sees is weakness. The Spiritual Man does not seek fullness, so the world despises an empty thing.

58. The Spirit is trapped in this world, and the flesh demands belonging. And so The Spiritual Man chooses his place of belonging on the grounds of compassion.

59. There are three paths to the One: the path of action, the path of devotion, and the path of Knowledge, but the surest of these is the path of Knowledge. Yet none is strong against idolatry.

60. Our detractors accuse us of negativity, of pessimism, of denial. So be it. It is they who refuse to confront the dissatisfaction that eats at their hearts like a hungry worm.

61. The benighted may not see The Light, because their eyes have closed in the darkness. And yet to those whose eyes are pierced by The Light he gives power to become sons of light: the flame already in them grows stronger.

62. Where, then, is healing to be found? The Pneuma is present in the world – not only in some men, but in the order of events. But to the world, its order is disorder.

63. To side with the Demiurge is to side with order. A tyrant is benevolent as long as we enjoy his favour. But the supporter of a tyrant should always be ready to see himself put to death for the sake of order.

64. The Spiritual are not hedged by race or by class, by gender or by age; Wisdom does not spring from brain or tongue.

65. The material world is real enough, but that reality is hierarchical. That is, matter is not evil – simply inferior.

66. The Truth, like the royal state, does not reside in the flesh of one person. "The king is dead. Long live the king!"

67. The criminal and victim are one. The judge must select by caprice, then assert a justice beyond reproach. But the fat are not worthy of praise nor the lean of blame. The righteous men slain by the oppressor even as he offers sacrifice, or the pilgrim crushed by the falling tower at the holy place – they do not receive their just desert.

68. The world is a place of deception. This deception is promoted by the angels of Ialdabaoth and their servants, and is expressed in superstitious practices: idols and altars and temples and sacrifices and libations to The Powers. Religious language itself may be a stumbling-block in the path of Truth: thus one who hears the word "God" does not perceive what is correct, but perceives deception. It is necessary to turn away from deception in order to be free of The Powers; The Spiritual are able to overcome deception with Truth. What do you perceive the emptiness with? Perhaps you apprehend it with The Truth within – if there is Truth within. If, on the other hand, there is no Truth within, then you only see and feel what your flesh and its psychic servant likes or loathes.

69. That which overturns matter is seen as a destroyer by those in thrall to The Powers.
70. The Carnal, ever limited by their nature, see only idols that may gratify their manifold needs.
71. The true centre of our being resides elsewhere. This is both our peace and our restlessness, our stillness and our urge.
72. The spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion.
73. The impulse to order is genuinely divine; the impulse to worship order is not.
74. The Powers do not change men for the better. They simply confirm them in their corruption. Those who worship The Powers worship their own carnal natures and are controlled entirely by instinct.
75. The tyrant is himself a prisoner.
76. The One knows The One. What need has The One to pray? Our wills attend on The One; what need have we to pray? What need have those whose wills attend on The One to ask for anything?
77. Despair of the world brings hope.
78. Will is the fundamental principle of all independent life.
79. The Psychic may choose The Light, and because this choice transcended nature, something may be reborn.

80. Enlightenment is the gift of the few to the many.

81. Though there is more than one path, there is only one goal: transcendence of "self".

82. Nothing can come between The Spiritual and eventual bliss.

83. To the tribes The Spiritual are of no account; to the leaders they are invisible.

84. Zeal in reform is commendable; holy war is good. But this is not our way, for we are the ultimate subversive.

85. Some ages may sink into a depravity which guarantees their eventual extinction in the way of all flesh.

86. It is those most committed to the illusion who succeed in the eyes of the world. It is those who succeed in the eyes of the world who fail to grasp the true nature of things.

87. There is one system, one illusion. It has a demonic beauty, and torments us.

88. God is not supreme. Miracles do not happen. This is because matter came into being before God, and God himself cannot change the iron laws of the material universe. Because he does not possess the ultimate spiritual supremacy, he is unable to "save" us.

89. A mediator may take a costly gift to appease a tyrant and win favours from him. To suppose that God is such a ruler is a notion unworthy of God or of His

true worshippers, and will attract only those intent on suing the Deity for favours.

90. There are always those who seek a profession as mediators. Entry to the Kingdom by those who are its citizens needs no such mediation and therefore no priesthood.

91. Ialdabaoth is not the ultimate authority. But being order in matter, his is the Word.

92. None are victims of something called "evil". All are victims of the way the world is – the inexorable laws of nature.

93. True consciousness is a cross to bear: there is no sense of moral superiority to motivate; there is no covenant with a personal god to inspire; and there is no divine providence to comfort. Consciousness is an end in itself.

94. In the flesh the gap between saint and sinner is imperceptible. "God" must base his selection on caprice, then assert a justice beyond argument and reproach. Such is the way of the tyrant Ialdabaoth, himself the prisoner of iron laws.

95. The Spiritual can not be identified by any physical, mental or moral characteristics. And because the world is irredeemable, there is no point in forming an organisation which promotes faith. There can be no scripture, no sacrifice, and no priesthood.

96. Anything experienced is, by its nature, less than true reality. The enlightened possess true perspective as part of their nature – it cannot be acquired by effort.

97. If the existence of neither revealer nor revealed can be recognised as authorities higher than the allegedly "supreme" Ialdabaoth, then both, dimly perceived, have to be imported into the deity. But their subjection makes idols of them.

98. There are those who say, "We have the keys to salvation. Salvation is easy. Simply do as we say!" There are those who say, "You enjoy a worldly prosperity. That in itself is a sign of grace. Come and join our ranks, and add to that the assurance of salvation!" There are those who say, "Salvation is an amusing game that adds spice to our comfortable lives. Come and join us: realise your full potential!" How subtle and persuasive are The Powers! – not the dumb idols we habitually suppose them to be!

99. Those who are supposed to be guardians of spiritual matters – the scribes, the teachers, the priests – are no less open to corruption than the infidels. Only the gift of suffering strips such corruption away and raises head and voice above the edge of the prison wall.

100. The comfort of rites is a comfort of sleep, where materiality is dreamed as order and justice.

101. People may use a mediator in their dealings with God, but to do so presupposes that there are two classes of human beings, one of which is closer to God.

102. If you pray to God, then it is Ialdabaoth; if he comes to your aid then it is Saklas.

103. Knowledge is not the gift of a just god. It is that which offers refuge from an unjust demiurge, who

disposes of his illusory riches capriciously, and leads the recipients to ignorance and eternal night.

104. Knowledge is not a gift. It is the right and the burden of those imprisoned yet already free.

105. We say "Not this" and "Not that", and dissatisfaction eats at your heart like a hungry worm.

106. The One is unnamed and ineffable, the source of all being.

107. The One is pure and does not strive, since The One lacks nothing. The One is unnamed, and yearns for no thing.

108. The Carnal and The Psychic will always worship The Powers, for they are their vices raised to a principle. The Carnal Man who sacrifices his own self for his family or friends does a noble thing, even if he is acting under instinct. This instinct is indeed a higher impulse than the drive to self-preservation. There is some sense in which nature is refined by it. It creates a window in matter for the Fullness to be revealed.

109. The Eternal Being's Fullness is by nature apart from matter, but has become widely scattered and briefly detained in the world because of an accident.

110. Purity was divided; thus "he" became "they".

111. The One in us perceives beyond mortal ken; this is "Gnosis".

112. From The One came the All. Only The One knows the One. And those who seek proof of the One need only to acknowledge their yearning.

113. The utterances of The Spiritual are the Word of The One.

114. Transcendence of this world is not an experience open to all. Wisdom derives from a perspective rather than an experience. Hence the quest for induced enlightenment is fruitless.

115. For true Gnostics there is no providence. The Spiritual are trapped and are returning through the aeons by paths of liberation which are difficult, and known only by themselves. Yet liberation is assured.

116. May The One reach out to the knowledge within you and draw you to the ultimate goal.

117. The True Reality is beyond us. This One can not be perceived by anything other than The One. The One can only ever be described in terms of The One.

118. The material world is real enough, but that reality is hierarchical. That is, matter is not evil - simply inferior. This perspective on the material world is related to an insight into the way things have come to be as they are.

119. Myth must negate itself in the telling if idols are not to be engendered.

120. There are no sacraments. "Salvation" is in Knowledge, a Knowledge that cannot be conferred.

121. In the first phase survival is all. Ruled by The Powers, whom we name as gods, we seek to bend them to our will by bribes and flattery, by submission or intimidation. Then we create patterns of cause and effect. Gratification is reward, denial is punishment: the fat are blessed, the lean are cursed. And we trace all causes to one cause, whom we call "God". Soon we see that the fat are not praiseworthy nor the lean worthy of blame. So our patterns become more tenuous: our ancestors were righteous or sinners, or we ourselves in a previous life. But this rightly offends a sense of justice, and so we find a second source for evil, or suppose that God's ways are inscrutable to men. And so we wait in vain for the overcoming of the one, or the revelation of the other.

122. Nomos is not a cosmic force: human behaviour is affected by but cannot affect the laws of nature.

123. Suffering is not caused by transgression, and death cannot be overcome by obedience to law.

124. It is not possible for anyone to state the destiny of humankind beyond death. But because God is eternal, that destiny too is eternal, for true mankind is in the mind of God. Those who seek the truth about their destiny in order to fulfil it join their wills with the will of God and may therefore participate in the eternity of the divine nature.

125. The principle which guides us has no beginning and no end. We are heirs to Eternal Truth and Life, and we are trustees of The Way.

126. If The Powers exist in the mind, were they not put there by The Powers? The path that leads beyond is a liberation.

127. The universe and events within it are without meaning. There is no good news to proclaim. An account of primeval events merely enables whoever has ears to hear it to derive some comfort from understanding their true predicament in this material universe.

128. None are victims of something called "evil". Do not seek to exonerate God by blaming man. When Jehovah manufactured this cannibal coil within eternity, he made it on the basis of laws which had nothing to do with right or wrong. All are victims of the way the world is – the inexorable laws of nature.

129. It would be nonsense to say that The Carnal Man is "saved" by sacrifice. He has no "self" to save.

130. Some ages may strive towards understanding in the manner of The Animate Man. Such cultures may become transfused with enlightenment, but such enlightenment is the gift of the few to the many.

131. The enemy is "in here" as well as "out there". Mark well how The Powers are at work in our hearts. Admire them while spurning them. Never underestimate them: their strength is armed with cunning.

132. The most primitive religion seeks the renewal of nature by fertility. The more advanced religion seeks the renewal of society by justice. The highest religion seeks the transcendence of matter by Spirit.

133. If we cling to these notions of "good" and "justice" we merely increase the suffering of the self. Leave good and evil behind with the self, and go to where no thing exists, and yet All is.

134. There is a question which you dare not ask because you know it is foolish. Let it be framed for you: "Where is God to be found?" It has been answered many a time by the sages, but heard only by fools. God is within ourselves.

135. The task is not to establish systems. The task is to call forth those who share The Gnosis, to summon the invisible community of Knowledge and insight – an invitation to all The Spiritual to celebrate here the Consciousness which we always have shared, and always will, that we may enjoy it together at our Source in greater measure to all eternity.

136. Struggle from the chrysalis of this world and take wing to regions which are intimated only by yearning. Those who seek proof of The One need only to acknowledge this yearning. Their despair is the harbinger of hope.

137. Marriage to the world is prostitution, in which the whore demands not only a fee, but a retainer for her services, and the husband is client to his own pimp.

138. Notions of "good" are corrupted by consideration of the provisional, the transitory, the self-serving. These weave the sticky thread of the illusory reality of this world. Morality may be an instrument of prey against the freedom of the self.

139. That which overturns the iron necessity of matter is seen as a destroyer by those in thrall to The Powers. Men of Knowledge, however, are able to read such events as signs which are effective to the healing of the spirit.

140. The land is ours; we are the kingdom. What need have we of a king?

142. If we cling to notions of "good" and "justice" we merely increase the suffering of the self. Leave good and evil behind with the self, and go to where no thing exists, and yet All is.

143. Discourse with one's fellow spiritual beings brings the purest pleasure this world can offer: it is memories of youth and dreams of happy old age. For The Spiritual Man knows that one day, no matter how long the term of the sentence, and how protracted the torments inflicted by those who for a day lord it over him, he will return to his home in The One, to be lost – and found – forever in the bliss of union.

144. Three things are necessary to start out on the path to enlightenment: first, a culture; second, a religion; third, suffering. One is the soil, one the sunshine, the other the rain. But the seed comes only from The One.

145. We perceive, we analyse, we interpret, we mould, we subjugate reality to ourselves. And we say that the root of our systems is "God" – a god made in our own image. When we worship this image, we worship ourselves.

146. Where, then, is Truth to be found? I can only tell you – since I can only use words out of falsehood – where Truth is not to be found.

147. The Eternal Being's Fullness is by nature apart from matter, but has become widely scattered and briefly detained in the world because of an accident. Those who share The Transcendent show their true natures by detachment from carnality and a compassion for those who suffer false hope about the possibilities of this world.

148. The Spirit suffers in flesh the enmity of The Powers.

149. Our souls cry out at injury to the flesh, but these injuries dissolve with the flesh that gave them birth. None are victims of "evil". All are victims of the world.

150. We hear the cries. Ialdabaoth is powerless to overcome the iron laws which lead to suffering and death.

151. The Enlightened are so by nature.

152. The message is an expression of The Spiritual Man's sublimity. Worship of the messenger shows The Psychic Man's mendacity aided and abetted by The Carnal Man's stupidity.

153. Transcendence of this world is not an experience open to all. Wisdom or "Enlightenment" derives from a perspective rather than an experience. Hence the quest for Enlightenment as an experience induced by meditation is fruitless.

154. Though there is more than one path to the goal, the ultimate aim and end of all true Life is to transcend that illusion which we call the "self". The Way is not to give up one's own "self" in order simply to be absorbed into another "self". Religion offers many such illusory paths.

155. The benighted may not see The Light, because their eyes have closed in the darkness.

156. Misfortune may be a purgative for the purification of spirit, but pain refines the gold: it does not place it in the heart.

157. Only those who know are saved – not from pain, but from the deeper torment and waste of self-delusion.

158. The three kinds of men – Carnal, Animate and Spiritual – exist because of the way that the universe has come about, and not as a result of some capricious act of election on the part of a demiurge.

159. If there is good news to be brought to the world concerning its redemption, its messenger must speak the same language as the world and be at home with its ways. The Gnostic, however, is a stranger and alien in the world. He can in no way proclaim a message which will enable his hearers to be reconciled to the world.

160. There is comfort, nevertheless, for The Spiritual – and only The Spiritual – in knowing (or rather, recognising, since he already knows) the cause of his exile, and the character of his home. Reclining in the walled garden of the gathered, the teacher brings the

purest pleasure of this world: shared memories of youth and dreams of labours past. The sage brings news of home.

161. Man is mortal, but The Gnosis can never die; man is weak, but The Gnosis has mastery of all that endures.

162. The Gnosis is not hedged by race or by class, by intelligence, language, gender or age.

163. The Carnal Man is part of the material world. The Animate Man perceives that he is part of this world and seeks either to alter or retain his position within it. To The Spiritual Man, however, the natural world is a prison. But the spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion.

164. Carnal Man is ignorant of The Supreme Being and will return entirely to matter. Meanwhile, ever limited by his nature, he clings to idols that may gratify his manifold needs. For in him matter is dominant. This dominance manifests itself in a preoccupation with the consumption necessary to maintain material integrity. His desire to bring order into matter is simply an expression of a desire to dominate it.

165. The Psychic may remove his self from the centre of things, and by so doing turn his back on the world.

166. Spiritual Man has the capacity to know fully The Supreme Being, and his ultimate destiny is to enter into complete union with that Supreme Being; for Spiritual Man uniquely within the material universe shares the nature of The Supreme Being.

167. The prime virtue of The Spiritual Man is detachment, and this leaves no mark for the eyes of the world to behold.

168. The difference between The Spiritual and the non-spiritual is not simply one of belief: the non-spiritual is actually incapable of grasping what The Spiritual is talking about.

169. The insights of The Spiritual may be manifest as deeds, utterances or decrees. They may be enshrined in histories, codes or rituals. Their form may be poetic, philosophical or legislative. But beyond all these is the Word of enlightenment which comes from The One.

170. The Carnal seek investment, not beauty.

171. The Carnal Man is subject to Ialdabaoth's laws. The Spiritual Man has to overcome the world. But The Psychic Man strives actively to promote the principles on which the world was founded, and thereby compounds its suffering.

172. The Animate Man who re-orders his universe may become a means for the Light to shine in the darkness. And because this choice transcended nature, something of him may be saved for re-birth further along the path to The One.

173. The Spiritual Man meets Enlightenment as Truth and is helped towards liberation.

174. Those who sit in judgment always find for themselves. Seek The Spiritual Man, therefore, among those whom the world condemns.

175. For The Spiritual Man salvation is not an issue. The spark can never be lost, though the whole world fall back into confusion. The issue is liberation. The means of liberation is Knowledge.

176. The Animate Man meets Enlightenment as mythos. This myth may enable him to shape his life into the pattern of Truth, thus making way for the Logos.

177. Those who are heirs to The Truth are not recipients of some inscrutable "grace": they participate in Truth by nature. The question then is not the root of the creator's caprice, but how the heirs of Truth became trapped in matter.

178. The gifts given by The Spiritual Man are in themselves their own proof of value to the discriminating, the recipient possessed of inbred taste. The Carnal are like the vulgar who need advice on how to furnish their house.

179. It may be that in some way which is beyond our comprehension the sacrifice made by The Carnal Man creates a door in matter for the emissary of The Fullness to enter. But those who are non-knowers will get no further than the outer portals; and those who Know are already within the inner sanctum.

180. The insights of The Spiritual may be focused into gems which attract the light, although these jewels may be lodged in poor settings.

THE GNOSIS

The bringing-into-being of the material universe has been a process of centrifugal departure from the ultimate reality to levels where consciousness is increasingly attenuated. There is, nevertheless, a definite gulf between the realm of consciousness and that of inert, unconscious matter, which is not the result of any providential "creation". When a conscious (or "proprioceptive") element is introduced into matter a futile dialectic is initiated between will and matter, which is sinister to the extent that it subverts pure consciousness's contemplation of itself.

Consciousness, although ultimately its higher source, is not proprioception. Proprioception is a process, developed by the evolutionary process, with an end in mind: to sustain a material subject by monitoring its surroundings and making changes compatible with the survival of its own perceived integrity. Its motive force is will. The will's subject dreams of its successful domination of its environment. "God" is self-interest in its most successful form imaginable – "success" being defined by longevity and domination. He is immortal and omnipotent, and promises power and eternal life to his worshippers. He is essentially the will to power.

In the human sphere, intuition of pure "divine" consciousness may reside in the mind of man, but is always co-mingled and confused with, and corrupted by, "intelligence." Intuition is an awareness which, as an aspect of consciousness, is an end in itself; intelligence is a proprioceptive mental faculty which, although divine in origin, is usually directed towards matter and subject to the direction of carnal will. If

intelligence is to be directed or re-directed towards true consciousness, there must first be a true perception. This perception is possessed solely by the spiritual man. Intimation of the spiritual realm is innate in those who share the spiritual nature.

The bringing-forth of order within the realm of matter is approved of by intuition. It is this approval which enables repentance to come about. When the impulse towards order-in-matter re-directs itself towards true consciousness (the Fullness, or "Pleroma") then order can be re-oriented to the transcendence of matter. But while the impulse to order is genuinely divine, the impulse to worship order as an end in itself is not. It is rather a form of idolatry prevalent throughout religion. Because intuition cannot be denied or negated even as idolatry is being practised, the true end of intelligence is perceived deep within the heart. Because it cannot be denied, it expresses itself in human aesthetic activity. It is as a result of this process that beauty may be found within the material world.

History is essentially will seeking to express itself through matter in time; repentance and re-ascent must take the form of a rejection of these carnal elements – although asceticism can simply be another manifestation of the will to power. Meanwhile, the pneumatic, imprisoned in matter, are not an "elect". In "election", a God personally chooses who is to be saved on the basis of criteria which are inaccessible to both the elect and to the damned. If that God is supposedly the fount of all justice then this is a flagrant and self-contradictory abuse of his status, and the outrage felt by the creature makes him morally superior to his Creator. The wrong is only compounded by ascribing blame to an ancestor (Adam in the Judaeo-Christian

tradition) who was an individual, morally free agent independent of his descendants. In fact, there is no chosen "elect". "The Spiritual" are what they have been and always will be without beginning and without end. Their essential nature is not some-thing created from no-thing, but rather an emanation from The Ultimate, which they must re-appropriate by anamnesis. Their physical prison has enclosed them by a primordial accident.

The gulf between The Carnal, the creations of the demiurge, and The Spiritual, emanations from The Ultimate One, is explicable. The existence of a middle order of humankind which aspires to so much in organised religion in all its various manifestations, and yet so consistently contradicts its declared ideals, is not so easy to explain. In mythological terms: the demiurge believed himself to be supreme. In order to enlighten him (and to simultaneously chastise him) the Pleroma had to reveal the spiritual to the material, thereby causing some of the former to be ensnared and temporarily abandoned by the return of the immaculate to the Fullness. This was how "The Spiritual" came to be in the world. But the action of a being of spirit, in its desire to enlighten, created something hybrid, both carnal and spiritual, a reflection of mind, just as the demiurge was a reflection of desire. "The Spiritual" and "The Psychic" therefore emanate from the same source, but are of a different order.

Because revelation of The Spiritual was a moral act, The Psychic have a moral element which raises them above mere Desire. They are at their best when the moral element is combined with Ialdabaoth's impulse to order and shape; we see them exemplified in

reforming saints: holy men and women and other "spiritual" leaders. They are, nevertheless, not of the same order as The Spiritual, who are a seed which grows secretly.

The Spiritual can not be identified by any physical, mental or moral characteristics. They cannot therefore form any identifiable group in human society. Even faith, whether or not it is expressed in a publicly observable ritual, can not admit them to "The Company of The Spiritual" in a sense comparable to "The Company of The Faithful" in Christian orthodoxy. The Spiritual are perhaps from time to time able to recognise the traits which they have identified in themselves, but this is no guarantee that what they have perceived is a decisive indication: the more authentic the trait, the less perceptible it is to the senses. Our senses and perceptions are in any case susceptible to deception by ourselves and others; and, furthermore, The Psychic will share some of the spiritual characteristics of The Spiritual.

Even if The Spiritual were able to form themselves into some kind of caucus, they could lay no claim upon the service of others - nor, indeed, is there anything they would desire from them in this world. "Church" is therefore not possible. Because the material world is irredeemable, there is no point in forming an organisation which promotes the cause of faith in redemption. And because God does not act in the world as Saviour, there can be no scripture, no ritual sacrifice, and no priesthood. There is no providence, no prayer, and no "God". The only sacrifice is that of The Spiritual, who suffer in their own flesh the consequences of their knowledge of the designs of the Powers and therefore the hostility of The Powers

towards them. Even Gnostics, if they organise themselves into a "Church", will fall prey to those corruptions which are the inevitable result of admitting people who see entry either as a means of improving their material situation, or as a way of seeking to extend material "blessings" into eternity, or as a way of seeking sanction for, or endorsement of, their own superiority, priority or specialness. These are the ports of entry for the doctrinal vices of an organised Church. The corruption of Truth is manifold: the development of a sacrificial theology and cultus; schemes involving the purchase of spiritual merit; sponsorship of religion in order to promote social stability, or by disaffected and disenfranchised groups, or by social groups based on race, class or sexuality; situations where association, or where aesthetic pleasure or expressions of cultural identity are paramount; families or other groups seeking self-aggrandisement by the material support of shrines; authors seeking personal aggrandisement or profit by publishing projects; issues of control over endowed assets; the confusion of religion with magic; and the influence over the definition of Truth by endowed remuneration – all are manifestations of this corruption.

Because everyone feels the need to regard themselves as special, the idea of providence creeps in. The Spiritual, it is believed, are chosen from among the rest as part of God's grand design. This elect have not been trapped in the world as a result of accident or folly: they have been placed there for a purpose. In short, they are God's chosen instrument in the salvation of the world. But there is no providence. The Spiritual are trapped and are returning through the aeons by paths of liberation which are difficult and known only to

themselves, even if liberation is assured. Perhaps the doctrine of providence is the authentic expression of the truth about the psychic (as distinct from the spiritual) order. The revelation of the spiritual order was indeed an act of will on the part of a being higher than the one called "God". The act of volition brought into being those called "Psychic" for the benefit of The Carnal, but since The Carnal are not equipped for enlightenment the sacrifice of The Psychic on the altar of matter is in vain.

Morality is the preserve of The Psychic. (For The Carnal, morality is only a fear of an external and punishing authority which keeps their lusts in check.) When the Pleroma wished to reveal the realm of the Spirit to the Demiurge, it brought into being a higher sentiment. The Carnal seek to bring order into matter, and Ialdabaoth is a principle of order, but this is simply an expression of the will to power. It is only when this purely carnal order-in-matter is measured over against the non-material realm that morality is born. If there is a simple knowledge that there is a spiritual realm present, and there is an impulse towards it, then the material realm will be measured over against the spiritual realm by those who experience the impulse. This breeds a profound dissatisfaction with things as they are in the material sphere. It is this dissatisfaction which engenders morality and is codified by The Psychic into Law. The Psychic then extend its provisions to The Carnal by promoting sanctions, real or imagined.

"Conscience" is the active manifestation in moral decision-making of the innate spiritual nature of some human beings. The spiritual nature of some human beings is identical with, and participates in, the nature

of a Spirit which transcends the material universe; conscience is therefore attuned to moral principles which transcend behaviour necessary to material well-being. It is the voice of an "alter ego" emanating from a differently-constituted identity. As the voice of our spiritual nature, it may conflict with the demands of our carnal nature. It is seen to be capable of passing judgment on all notions of deity and all theories of the relationship between a creator and the created order. Since systems are subject to the same judgment as deities, a systematic theology, or an appeal to a historical tradition or divinely-sanctioned authority is out of the question. Any such attempt will make a poor imitation of Truth. Our aim should not be to establish systems. Our aim should be to call forth those who share The Knowledge. This summoning of an invisible community of insight, this "thing called forth" (*ecclesia*), is the nearest we dare approach to forming a Church without compromising The Truth.

Pneumatic Man is, by dint of his physical nature, drawn into the preoccupations of Carnal Man. But because he shares in higher consciousness he remains aloof from his power-games. He sees the material organism in context, and appreciates how its behaviour is determined by matter and will. He is therefore detached from "this world", and perceives its dictates as stemming from a lower order of reality. For him true consciousness is a burden to bear: there is no sense of moral superiority to motivate; there is no covenant with a personal god to inspire; and there is no divine providence to comfort. Consciousness is an end in itself. Its possessor is a stranger and alien in the world. He bears no message which will enable his hearers to be reconciled to the world.

Gnostics do not entertain any idea of "progress". A Spiritual Principle is journeying through time and matter without its destiny being intertwined with them. In this way, we pre-empt the disillusion which we are heirs-to. Because those who share The Knowledge did not obtain it by subscribing to a set of beliefs, it must be said that there is no such phenomenon as "gnosticism", to the extent that Truth is not an "ism" at all. Hence, if a person can answer "Yes" to the question, "Were you with me before the beginning?" then they are "Gnostic" - by nature rather than by belief. Those who are Gnostic are able to perceive in their own human life the cosmic drama of Sophia's repentance and the reciprocal descent of the Gnosis. As Gnostics, our quest is to find and gather all those in the physical body who can affirm this Truth. The Truth is, however, obscured by the demands of The Powers that emanate from Ialdabaoth, namely, Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Preference, Wealth, Family and Territory. Every religious system which has hitherto been known to humankind has been corrupted by these; only The Gnosis in its pure form transcends them. The Gnostic is therefore indifferent to the acquiescence or non-acquiescence of non-Gnostics. Indeed, The Truth may find itself entombed in the pyramid of a religious system, quietly but confidently awaiting resurrection into the light of day.

The moral character of the demiurge is far inferior to that of his supposed creatures. And as for that Creation, with infinite power could we not have done a better job ourselves? Hemmed in as we are on all sides by the iron laws of nature, it is the knowledge of this Truth in the heart of our hearts which will set us free - and the conviction that we belong to something that transcends all of this. Such is our consolation.

A CHRISTIAN GNOSIS

Theologians and philosophers of religion who have reflected on the encounter between Christianity and other religions have observed that the challenges produced by the era of rapid colonial expansion had their analogy in the pluralism of the Roman empire amidst which Christianity was born. The Stoic and Alexandrian principle of the "logos spermatikos" ("the seminal word") was regarded by some as God's gift to the Greeks, and a form of divine revelation. It was possible in the light of this principle for Christians to quote the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, which spoke of the incarnate Word as "the true light which enlightens every man" (*John* 1:9), and interpret this as meaning that there were indeed various deposits of truth scattered around the various religions and philosophies of the world, needing only to be brought out, made manifest and fulfilled by a Messiah who was "Christus Consummator". Until recently, scholars tended to assume that apostolic orthodoxy during the pre-Constantinian period was pestered by minor heterodox aberrations. The discovery of papyri at Nag Hammadi, only made available in English in the last half-century, shows the extent to which an "alternative" Christianity had developed before its exponents and their Scriptures were ruthlessly suppressed by the newly-established Church in the fourth century after Christ.

Christian Gnosticism (the accepted label for the "heresy" of which we speak) took as its basis the teaching of Jesus. The pressing question for Gnostics was: How could the important revelation embodied in his sayings be commended to a sophisticated cosmopolitan civilisation, often morally degenerate,

but nevertheless heir to an advanced and patently admirable philosophical legacy – like the India in the era of colonial expansion? The nineteenth-century Hindu reformer Rammohun Roy thought that the fables which formed the basis of "orthodox" Christology would cut little ice with educated Hindus. For the Gnostics, the problem was the Old Testament. Part of the problem for Rammohun was the extent to which he should accommodate some of the "mythological" material embedded in the New Testament. Gnostics solved the problem by regarding such mythological material as provisional – as so much grist to the mill of Truth. In other words, the Truth embodied by the teaching of Jesus was not dependent on any symbolic or mythological system – even that of the Torah or of the Messianic *kerygma* of the Petrine circle of apostles. The Christian Gnostics appeared to have an eschatology, but it was one of destruction rather than consummation. They did not entertain any idea of "progress". The cosmos was a closed and morally neutral system. (I do not believe that Gnosticism in its purest form regarded matter as "evil". Moral dualism was an overlay of the "orthodox".) The "spiritual principle" (for want of a more precise and universally acceptable phrase) was journeying through time and matter without necessarily seeking to express itself in and through these media. In this way, they pre-empted the disillusion which we are heirs-to and anticipated that sometimes harsh realism which is and will be undoubtedly necessary for the solving of our ecological problems and which is so difficult to extrapolate from the Judaeo-Christian tradition encumbered with its central notion of providence.

The "spiritual principle" which I have mentioned, and which the Gnostics called "gnosis", seems at first sight to be identical to the "spirit" spoken of by the nineteenth-century Unitarian Martineau. But Martineau, working within a framework which is essentially optimistic about human nature and the world, believes that this "spirit" is present in equal measure in all humankind. It is simply a matter of furnishing human beings with an authoritative statement of the truth to elicit an awareness of the spiritual principle within them as the necessary preamble to its needs and aspirations coming to expression in worship and philanthropic endeavour. This is the largely implicit assumption in Rammohun's programme of publishing "purified" Scripture from both the Hindu and Christian traditions. But the Gnostics did not believe that the "gnosis" – an inherent "knowledge" or "insight" into the true nature of the reality which transcends the cosmos – was present in all human beings. By an accident of nature which Gnostics were willing to express in one way or another in mythological terms – including re-workings of the Adam and Eve myth in *Genesis* – only an unspecified number of human beings possessed the "gnosis". In other words, Gnostics were sustained by an élitism wholly foreign to the Unitarian tradition.

I sense a deep affinity with the Rammohun Roy which transcends mere ideas or personality. The Gnostics would have had ways of explaining this affinity, and why events do not always seem to be on their side, and why the numbers of "enlightened" seem so small. Most of the affinities we possess with fellow human beings seldom rise to the level of consciousness. They may be affinities of class, race, or culture, or temperament. More often than not, they are complex

co-mixture. If self-interest forms the warp of society, these may be said to form the weft. They are deeply rooted in the instinctive life of the species, even if they are justified or explained in language which uses moral or spiritual terms. Circumstances may occasionally arise in which human minds are brought into contact with each other through the medium of a common language without the benefit or hindrance of strong common affinities. The affinities may be prevented by geography, or, more usually, removed by time. Being the very foundation of human social life, they may be destroyed by death, even if personality or principle survives in written form. It is this latter phenomenon - the survival and manifestation of personality and/or principle when other affinities are not in evidence - which is my enduring preoccupation.

I go back to Jesus of Nazareth. In terms of the usual affinities none of us have anything in common with this man. But his mind is to a limited extent accessible to us in what is preserved of his sayings in the gospels. What happens when we encounter a person in this way? One possibility is that we do not encounter them as a person at all. Literary remains become the object solely of scholarly attention, a source for the history of ideas. In this case, personality or principle can barely be said to have survived at all. This has not happened in the case of Jesus. In his case we have the classic example of the assimilation of remains to the service of a particular race, class or culture. Since these express themselves in myth, the remains of an individual may be "mythologised". This did happen in the case of Jesus. Even before his death it appears that his identity was being assimilated to that of the popular Jewish mythological figure of the "messiah". Since the myth is

archetypal, it has endured, and taken the words of Jesus along with it. In these circumstances, I believe that "personality" becomes dependent on the particular form of the myth in any age.

Another possible outcome is that of *recognition*. Something in the mind of the person is not only encountered, but recognised, and recognised as something valuable, to be cherished. This is not to be confused with an affinity of temperament. When I read the words of Jesus, provided that I can filter out the mythological framework that the Evangelists placed them in, I do not encounter personality. What I encounter is "principle", and this transcends the common affinities. There may be said to be an "affinity of principle".

The problem with Jesus of Nazareth as an example is that it has become very difficult, if not impossible, to separate the man from the myth. And yet I believe that the notion of an "affinity of principle" is absolutely central to religion and what is of enduring value in it once the merely human and relative phenomena of class, race and culture have been filtered out. Indeed, if such a concept has any correspondence with an objective Truth, it may hold the key to all our futures insofar as it embodies the triumph of universal altruism over tribal interest, and higher reason over animal instinct.

Despite some of the uncertainties of the present age, there are still folk who cling to the notion that if we could strip Christianity of the accretions of the ages there is something in the message conveyed by Jesus of Nazareth which is authoritative. To such persons (and I include myself among them) to say that a

person is Christ-like is the ultimate compliment, and it is a compliment which I am inspired to pay to Rammohun Roy. I see the same impulse at work – call it "divine" if you will – in the lives of both of these men. It is a phenomenon which we may witness in the lives of other men and women who we may call "great".

I still glory in the name of "Christian". This is because I admire Jesus of Nazareth. In some ways, I suppose my Christology is fairly conventional: I am drawn by sympathy to Jesus because he was a victim, and I rejoice that in spite of all, the Truth embodied in his Word was vindicated. Where I part company with "Christendom" is in my belief that Jesus was as much a victim of the Apostles as of the Jewish establishment of the time. The urgent message of the Nazarene has been struggling to escape from the mythological shackles which Peter and his colleagues loaded it with ever since it was delivered.

* * *

The Spiritual may very rarely manifest itself in history, although the re-telling of it is inevitably corrupted by worldly considerations. For example, the Passover in around 1500 B.C.E. involved the slaughter of livestock by the Hebrews – a slave population in thrall to the Egyptians – before leaving the country *en masse*. These animals depended on permanent pasturage; their slaughter was part of a lightening of loads before leaving a land of settled agriculture in the Nile basin and entering the arid wilderness to the east, where life is nomadic and "on the edge", and the comforts – and thraldoms – of an already ancient civilisation did not

then pertain. Such was the result of a genuinely spiritual impulse.

However, when the story was told much later in a different setting, itself one of settled agriculture, the culling and ritual slaughter of spring lambs in the context of the Passover story became interpreted as a sacrificial substitution for firstborn male children, reflecting the priorities of the “new” society: the survival of the new generation, and in particular the children who were the product of youthful vigour: the firstborn. The sacrificial cultus needed a priesthood (absent at the original Passover) who slaughtered the spring lambs which could not be supported by existing pasturage in a purpose-built cultic location: the Jerusalem Temple.

By then another understanding common amongst all ancient cultures came into play: expiation of sin before an angry god by the offering of the life-blood of animals slaughtered for food. Thus, in the *pesach* story the blood of the sacrificed animal smeared over the doors of the households of the chosen people warded off a destroying angel; that is, the blood was offered to appease a fierce deity.

Both of these concepts superimposed over the original Passover story – the idea of a god who, unappeased, will demand the human sacrifice of the first-born child (as in the story of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac), and a god who may lose his temper if not placated by the blood of sacrifice – present a primitive notion of what the supreme deity is like: concepts unworthy of the true God. In other words, the original idea of renunciation towards freedom enshrined in the original Passover ritual has been corrupted by the

concept of a god who doles out rewards – such as the survival of descendants – and punishments for those who do not submit to an unquestioning obedience.

In this corrupted religion which developed after the success of the genocidal war against the Canaanites, the “promised land” and its agricultural prosperity were seen by the writers of the Jewish scriptures as a reward for obedience to a supposed covenant between the “chosen” people and their savage god. This covenant incorporated ideas of ritual uncleanness. By the time of Jesus, any condition which rendered the victim unclean was seen a curse by Jehovah for past sin (either by themselves or their forbears) along the lines of the theology of divine rewards and punishments inherent in the Jewish scriptures. Indeed, the concept of uncleanness linked to punishment justified the genocide of the Canaanites: their idolatry had made them “unclean”, as had certain customs (such as, for example, the shaving of the temples) not practised by the invading Hebrews. Any action which involved fraternisation with the Canaanites rendered the perpetrator “unclean”. In this scheme of things, well-established in orthodox Judaism by the time of Jesus, individuals prospered because their virtue was being rewarded by god, and individuals afflicted by an uncleanness such as leprosy were being punished for their own or their family’s vices.

In due course, after the occupation of Canaan, the divinely appointed king David and his descendants became the guarantor of the sacrificial cultus at a central cultic location on Mount Moriah (supposedly the site of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac) in Jerusalem. The covenant then became established with the Davidic king as a representative of the people. In

this capacity, the king himself could be rewarded or punished as a substitute for the people. Hence, after the disaster of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, the ideas of punishment of the king and the hope of expiation by him were expressed in the poetic passages in *Isaiah* describing a “suffering servant” whose sufferings could erase the guilt of those sins of Israel which had led to the disaster. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees clearly believed that the voluntary suffering of the righteous (such as themselves) could contribute to the redemption of the nation. Thus the practice of fasting became an important replacement for the festal meals which took place in the Herodian Temple, itself unclean as it was within the shadow of the Gentile Antonia fortress, and its Holy of Holies was overlooked by the palace of the Idumaeen Herod.

Thus, to point to the true God, a prophet must reject – and to re-affirm the primitive god, the guarantor of the Judaic race and culture, good Jews must incorporate – law, covenant, messiah-king, temple, substitutionary and expiatory sacrifices (with their priesthood and temples) and ritual cleansing. For the Petrine party (led by Peter, John and James) Jesus delivers or is all of these, and the “New Testament” was written by the Petrine party. (And we see in those documents a theology which is not fully developed: the idea of the risen body of Jesus as the new Temple in fulfilment of *Malachi* 3:1. Not enough time had passed between the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the writing of the Christian scriptures for it to develop. Nevertheless, as a nascent theology it required the story of a physical resurrection of Jesus.) The prophet Jesus rejected all of these cultic trappings and, before his death, re-affirmed the original meaning of the Passover:

dependence on The True God in a place (physical or spiritual) away from carnal preoccupations.

* * *

The real betrayer of Jesus was Peter.

Jesus was a Jewish reformer, the logical outcome of whose teachings found expression in the teachings of Gnostics which were suppressed by the “apostolic” heirs of Peter. Peter’s prime interest was power – the power that derived from being the principal follower of the Messiah and one of the twelve leaders of a re-constituted Israel. Unfortunately for Peter’s ambitions, Jesus himself never claimed to be the Messiah. And to make matters worse, Peter’s efforts to promote Jesus as the Messiah only resulted in Jesus’s ignominious death. Peter and his co-conspirators James and John therefore had to fabricate certain incidents to legitimise their claims: the raising of Jairus’s daughter, the Transfiguration, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden and, above all, the Resurrection. By such stories, attested by three male witnesses, they were able to perpetrate the fiction of a man who had power over death, whose divine authority was legitimised by Moses and Elijah, whose suffering and death was part of God’s plan, and who was vindicated by being raised from death. The story of the betrayal by Judas (ie. Thomas) and the tales of the chastening of “doubting” Thomas (ie. Judas) were invented as a polemic against those disciples of the party of Judas the Twin (Greek “Didymos”, Aramaic “Thomas”) who dissented from Peter’s lies and misrepresentations.

What was Jesus’s real mission? His aim was to gather the true Israel. The true Israelites were those who,

whatever their material circumstances, had existed as The Chosen in the mind of God since before the beginning of time. Wealth was no indicator of righteousness; neither was power. Ritual purity was no guarantee of salvation, or good works such as fasting and sacrifice. To The True God spoken of by Jesus they counted as nothing.

Jesus's own sufferings were meaningless except insofar as they showed forth the meaninglessness of suffering in this world – for is not true suffering by definition pain without meaning? If you are in pain and you don't know why, you suffer. If, on the other hand, there is a purpose to your pain, then the only issue is endurance. The one who cannot endure meaningful pain is a coward. The one who can endure it is brave. The one who endures pain himself in order to reduce the pain of others is a hero. Only a fool, however, would endure meaningless pain if it could be avoided. One who is God, or is privy to the mind of God, must know the meaning (as distinct from the scientific cause) of everything. He should also not be a fool. He therefore willingly embraces pain that has meaning while avoiding suffering. He is brave if the pain is great; he is a hero if his pain benefits others; but he is a fool if he wills suffering on himself. If the God-Man venerated by the Petrine Church suffered willingly, he is a fool – and God is a fool. If he heroically endures pain, he is great, but does not suffer. The Christ of the “apostles” can not suffer; in telling his tale, therefore, it is necessary to multiply the pains he endures: by such sorrows is his heroism augmented – a heroism befitting a king.

But is it possible to ascribe another kind of heroism to Jesus, a heroism that entails *genuine* suffering? When

confronted by the meaningless pain of others we make choices as to how we react to it. If we choose not to ignore it we may ascribe a meaning to it in order to alleviate our own anguish in the face of another's pain. One sure way of doing this is to see another's pain as self-inflicted. The meaning of their pain is that they earned it; one way or another, by karma or by retribution, they brought it upon themselves. This "meaning" alleviates our pain in beholding suffering, even as it adds to the pain of those who suffer. Who can accept that they have deserved their pain? The sense of a lack of justice only adds to meaningless pain, to suffering. But the one who cares about the suffering of others – and why should he, unless he is a real hero? – empathises with meaningless pain. He rejects any "meaning" which denigrates the sufferer. He does what he can to reduce or palliate their meaningless pain. But in so doing – and this augments his heroism – he increases his own pain, his anguish in the face of suffering, by undermining the meaning which reduces his own suffering. Jesus took this stance, which needed to be expressed within the terms of his Judaism as an end to retribution, a denial of messianic expectation, and a new sacrifice prior to a destination-less exodus.

Engagement with the suffering of others without indulging in self-palliative interpretation of it, thereby bringing empathic suffering upon oneself, is a truly altruistic and selfless stance. (The ultimate test of its altruism is whether the person in solidarity with the suffering can also disengage when this is what is required to benefit the object of their concern. The person who is not altruistic will often refuse to disengage because it does not serve their hidden motive.) By declaring this to be the root of morality,

expressed in the key word “agape” (“love”) and placing it firmly in a religious framework, Jesus and his prophetic forbears are more than suggesting that the path to fulfilment is trod only through the abandonment of self by immersion in the plight of the helpless. Morality is in fact the means by which the self is transcended.

Within the terms of his contemporary Judaism, the stance adopted by the Galilean rabbi required three theological innovations which, if allowed to go unchallenged, would have destroyed the foundations of the religion whatever its sectarian manifestation, whether Pharisaic, Sadducaic or Essene. The first was to sever the connection between pain and sin by declaring a jubilee of divine forgiveness. I believe that the jubilee announced by Jesus was unconditional. (The seven-times-seventh anniversary of the foundation of Herod’s Temple probably provided the justification for this.) The condition of a required “repentance” was developed by the Petrine faction after Jesus’s death – after all, who is inclined to repent? And why? Presumably the inclination and inspiration to do so is dependent on the unfathomable grace of Jehovah. The jubilee would in fact have acknowledged that absolution of a debtor is not dependent on the debtor’s worthiness of absolution.

But if God forgives unconditionally, why is there pain in the world? – surely not because God is tardy, incompetent or sadistic in not lifting the sentence of a reprieved felon? If God is not to be decried, then the logical inference is that there is no inevitable cause-effect relationship between sin and pain; or, if there is, God – being all-powerful – can suspend it at will. A true God need not be a slave to his own justice. But if

the unfortunate are not blameworthy, neither are the fortunate worthy of praise – a proposition intolerable to the Jewish orthodoxy of Jesus's day.

Of course, only a person who had God's very own authority in its fullness could declare such a jubilee – such as the Messiah. I do not believe that Jesus claimed such authority, or indeed that he claimed to be the Messiah (except in the imaginings of the Petrine faction). There is no record of such a claim in the Petrine Gospels apart from the historically suspect story of Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi (after the equally suspect story of the Transfiguration), and Jesus nowhere uses the title of himself and his mission. This is because Jesus was not concerned with the issue of authority. He was driven to declare a jubilee as the theological expression of his over-riding sense of solidarity with the suffering – those supposedly cursed by God, and therefore excluded from the community by their inability to fulfil the obligations of the ritual law.

So, if Jesus's pains were embraced deliberately as part of a divine plan can it be said that the Messiah proclaimed by Peter really suffered? Rather, just as the Israelites slaughtered their new-born livestock before leaving Egypt and following Moses into the desert, so the true followers of Jesus abandoned the messianic dream that died with the death of Jesus. This is the true meaning of the *pascha* effected by the death of Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus colluded with this "sacrifice" – and we have no way of knowing whether he did or not – then the priest who offered it was not Jesus himself, but Judas.

The essential message of the Nazarene was corrupted by his disciples, and in particular by those who called themselves "apostles"; and above all by Peter, James and John. Their assertion, motivated by a desire for power, that Jesus was the Jewish "Messiah" sealed his fate (which they blamed on Judas Iscariot), led to the intrusion of the miraculous, and created the entity known as "The Holy Spirit". These in turn have led to the creation of a "Church" which has all the vices of the institutional Judaism which Jesus set out to reform by his words and actions. Now that Judaism and Christianity are drenched in the blood of the innocent they can be seen for what they are. The time has come for those who share with Jesus the nature of the Gnosis to declare The Truth in its pristine purity.

* * *

In the cure of a man with a skin disease (*Mark* 1:40-45), at a stroke, by word – "Be clean!" – and by touch, Jesus declares the invalidity of the taboos which put outcasts beyond the pale of Holiness. But his compassion simultaneously destroys the Jewish explanation of personal catastrophe. A disease like leprosy was regarded as the just curse of God. To say the leper was "clean" would have caused scandal to the orthodox – even to Jesus's closest disciples. Perhaps this is why Mark or his source emphasises Jesus's instruction to meet the requirements of the ritual law. A more radical explanation would be that his attack on the taboo was beyond even the tolerance of Jesus's Jewish disciples, and his declaration of cleanliness was turned subsequently into a healing. But there is no evidence for this speculation beyond Mark's text and it is clearly an interpretation not supported by Mark himself. Jesus' apparent abrogation of the laws of uncleanness

presented similar problems of interpretation with respect to other incidents.

In the healing of the paralysed man (*Mark* 2:1-12), it is important to understand the basic assumption: the sick man is paralysed as a result of God's judgement on his sins. The first thing, therefore, that Jesus says is, "Your sins are forgiven". (It is only to overcome the murmurs of disapproval that Jesus goes on to heal the man.) In the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, a person's previous sins are of no account provided he repents and seeks God's forgiveness. What that person suffers physically is not related to their individual sin. They deserve compassion rather than condemnation. But what for Jesus was primarily a restatement of the significance of individual misfortune becomes, for Mark, a demonstration of Jesus' divine power.

The call of Levi (*Mark* 2:13-17) shows the same pattern as the calling of the other disciples: Jesus sees somebody at their trade, and says, "You! Stop what you're doing and come and follow me!" But here there is a significant difference. Levi's trade is the disreputable, almost criminal one of tax-collecting. Not only were tax-collectors ritually unclean, because they mixed with the hated foreigner, they were crooked: corruption was built into the Roman system. In countries that have fallen prey to corruption, you have to give a "back-hander" to the official concerned if you want anything done, otherwise he will not do his job. That was how the tax-system worked officially under the Roman authorities. It was assumed that the tax-collector would collect more than was required in tax and keep it. He would extract whatever he thought he could get away with. And the Romans would provide the military force to back up his demands no questions

asked, as long as they got their taxes. If you were living in a country where a hated foreigner had invaded and you had some of your own people collaborating with the invader, that would be bad enough; but when those collaborators actually came and started soaking you for money upon threat of foreign soldiers coming round and assaulting you or throwing you in jail, then you can imagine how people felt about these people. This is certainly the calling of a disciple with a difference. Mark's audience would probably not have reacted with the same degree of horrified consternation as those witnessing the original event: the rift with Judaism was already more-or-less complete and many of his readers would have been Gentiles. Indeed, Jesus's patent breaking of taboo would have been a source of comfort. But there may have been method in Jesus's madness in calling Levi. One of the things that united all Jews beyond the exclusive barriers created by the various factions was the necessity of paying the poll-tax levied specifically on Jews by the Romans in A.D. 6. If you were embarking on a mission to the Chosen People in a racially-mixed cosmopolitan area, who better to choose than someone who knew intimately who it was that continued to claim allegiance to Yahweh despite the real, financial cost? The "children" needed to be contacted first with an invitation to enter the Kingdom before the mission was extended to "house-pets" (*Mark* 7:27). Levi may have been a key agent in this mission. Perhaps there is some connection with this possibility and the ancient tradition that Levi was in fact Matthew, and the author of the most "Jewish" of the four Gospels.

The emphasis throughout the story of "Legion", the lunatic (*Mark* 5:1-13) is on ritual pollution. The man

lives in a cemetery, a place of uncleanness. According to the Law, if you touched a corpse you were made unclean. Those who were eager to extend and develop the Law said that even if you walked over somebody's grave, it made you unclean. This is why during major festivals tombs were whitewashed so that they could be seen from a distance. The madman in question actually lives in tombs – the sort of cave-tomb that Jesus himself was buried in. When the spirits are cast out they go into a herd of pigs – an unclean animal of the kind you would expect to find in Gentile – "unclean" – territory. The whole story is about Jesus going into a situation of extreme uncleanness. As in the case of the leper, Jesus' original preoccupation may have been the Jewish taboos involving "clean" and "unclean", but Mark's main concern is to show the supernatural power of Jesus against the forces of evil. The story becomes also another way of expressing the point made in "The Stilling of the Storm": that Jesus has the power to overcome the turmoil in which Mark's Christian audience were finding themselves at that time.

In the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter (*Mark* 5:22-24, 35-43) Mark has dovetailed two stories to show there is a gap between Jairus coming to him and him actually arriving and finding that the girl had died. No-one would have asked even the greatest of miracle-workers to attend a corpse. There are lots of interesting details which might have only come from an eye-witness: the name of the girl's father; Jesus's actual words in the Aramaic; the girl's age; Jesus' instruction after the healing. In particular, we are told that Jesus took Peter, James and John with him into the room. (Everybody would have normally avoided the room where the deceased person was laid as an

"unclean" zone.) So we can speculate that Mark's Gospel may have been based on an eye-witness report of Peter. Those who favour "natural" explanations of the miracles would find inspiration in the fact that in an eastern climate the whole business of burying the dead was accomplished with the utmost speed (see *Acts* 5:5-10). Perhaps the mourners were mistaken in their hasty belief that the girl had died!

In the story of the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34) the hint of euphemism in her "trouble" may not be the only reason why Mark seems to be struggling a little with this story. For instance, how does Jesus know that he has been touched? Mark introduces the idea that Jesus feels the power draining out of him – almost like a battery running down. Likewise, if a woman has some kind of menstrual problem, how does she know when it stops? Mark says, "She had the feeling inside herself" A person who was sick in certain ways might have been triply afflicted. First of all they might have had the pain of the illness; secondly the illness might have made them ritually unclean; and thirdly that uncleanness would have been regarded as the curse of God and would have led to them being shunned by those claiming or seeking righteousness. The woman with the bleeding had a gynaecological condition which rendered her unclean. She could have kept the condition a secret and just gone about her business, but presumably she was a devout woman who was troubled by the fact that she had been afflicted with this problem. But she could not resist the temptation to touch this holy man in the hope that she might be cured of her condition. She knew she was doing something which, in the eyes of conventional religion, was wrong: when you were unclean it was believed

that your ritual uncleanness could be transmitted to others. If this man was holy she should not have been touching him. That is why she was afraid when Jesus realised that he had been touched. Then much to her surprise, no doubt, she found that Jesus was forgiving, and did not seem to share these taboos about ritual cleanliness.

* * *

So, in the synoptic gospels, the afflicted are often “unclean”, and are pronounced “clean” by a saviour. The thaumaturgic word of Jesus of Nazareth, who is recognised as “the Holy One of God” by the demons of uncleanness, is an extension of John the Baptist’s ministry of ritual washing in the Jordan. In the original Jewish context, the pre-occupation of both John and Jesus was undoubtedly the enabling of “unclean” Jews to gain access to the Temple in Jerusalem. In the apostolic interpretation, which sought to universalise this ministry, the emphasis became the removal of a taint which had afflicted all humankind with a sickness unto death. Paul of Tarsus declared, “As in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive.” The progenitor of the human race had been poisoned by the ultimate non-*kosher* food – the fruit of Eden’s forbidden tree. The Petrine Christ, however, drinks the draught of death in Gethsemane and is hoisted up on the cross like Moses’ brazen serpent which neutralised the venom which was killing the Hebrews in the wilderness. (John’s Gospel makes the comparison explicit.) Miraculously, the Messiah of the Christian Gospels is restored – after the ritual pollution of his death “outside the camp” – to a hale humanity manifest in a resurrected body. And by faith anyone can opt into this de-toxified and immortalised

humanity by baptismal cleansing, freshly interpreted as participation in Jesus's death. By gazing and keeping the eyes of faith focussed on the cross, and by eating and drinking the miraculous antidote of the flesh and blood of Christ (a salve made explicit by the Christ of John the Evangelist) we become immune to the ills visited upon us by the primeval taboo – in token of which we flout the Noahide covenant forbidding the taking of blood and are permitted to transgress the most fundamental dietary prohibition known to man: the eating of human flesh. So it was that medieval Christendom became cannibalistic.

But this entire theological superstructure is built on a misinterpretation of *Genesis* and the laws in the *Torah* relating to purity. What in truth brought death to our first parents was the termination of access to the Tree of Life – and not some kind of poisoning.

There is no reason to believe that the Tree of Life was not included among all the trees (apart from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) the fruit of which they could eat prior to their disobedience. In the event, their transgression resulted in exclusion from the Garden of Eden, and in due course of time they died. They also lost their terms of familiarity with God. And shame entered the world. Jehovah showed them how to cover their newly-perceived nakedness with the skins of beasts, thereby instituting animal sacrifice. And the ultimate solution, eventually established at Horeb and Sinai, was to create a sacred enclave (according to a divinely-revealed pattern) in the midst of a separated and holy people – at first the temporary structure of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later the Temple in Jerusalem. Here the source and fount of all holiness could visit His people whose sins were

covered by the sacrifice of their most precious asset: livestock without blemish, imbued with the mystery of a life which, in the blood, was poured out as an offering to God.

In the later absence of a Temple and the means to effect animal sacrifice, whether by political annihilation or diaspora, the solution became increasingly the maintenance of a purified people by reverent adherence to the *mitzvot* and to sacred times and seasons. In the weekly Sabbath and the annual festivals the community created by adherence to the sacred ordinances could become the dwelling-place of the *shekhinah*. Salvation came about by keeping the Law, and not by some mystical communion with God by partaking of the flesh of a sacrificial victim.

Christianity is in fact the natural out-growth of a mind-set in which ritual impurity, at least at the time the Gospels were written, was interpreted as a demonic possession which could only be remedied by the intervention of a super-human God-Man. So much for The Unfortunates. As for the rest of the human race, its sinfulness was the result of a kind of poisoning brought on by the ingestion of the supreme non-*kosher* food item: the fruit of the Forbidden Tree. For the apostolic Church, the proffered solution for humankind-in-general is immersion in a purifying *mikveh* newly-interpreted as the tomb of Jesus – a tomb no longer (as in the Law) a place of profound uncleanness, infected by a corpse, but now the womb of a New Adam incorporated into the risen body of a miraculously-conceived Saviour and a community which, as the redeemed Church, is by faith the Body of Christ.

In this scheme of things, the original significance of “baptism” – or “immersion” – for the Jews is lost. For John the Baptiser, that meaning was as a ritual washing from creaturely impurity and a re-birth into the full identity of one of God’s holy people, set apart to His glory. Such an one, so cleansed, could enter the presence of God at the times and seasons appointed by Him, in the hope of the immortality lost with Eden at a date and in a manner within the secret counsels of the Holy One.

In Christian theology, Jesus of Nazareth mingles within his person the “evil” of Adamic human nature with the absolute goodness of the only-begotten Son of God. Those who are mystically “in Christ” (to use the terminology of Paul of Tarsus) drink blood – blood made *kosher* by the divine life of the God-Man whose command overcomes all taboos. The solution to the human predicament is a kind of magic seen in terms of exorcism or antidote. Baptism into Jesus’s death is the ultimate cure-all. Unfortunately, the symbolism doesn’t fit. Although the apostle and evangelist John makes great play of the water and the blood at Jesus’s crucifixion, the Saviour’s death was not primarily a death by immersion in water, nor were sacrifices in the Temple killed by water. The Hebrews were not drowned or even immersed in the Sea of Reeds, but walked through the parted waves as on dry land. And Noah’s Flood offers no precise analogy at all, since the wicked who were drowned did not come up again out of the waters. The nearest biblical parallel to a watery death and subsequent resurrection is Jonah’s transit through the belly of the whale. It is, indeed, a comparison put in Jesus’s own mouth as “the sign of Jonah”. It is only an exact parallel, however, if Jesus is seen as swallowed by Death without dying in its truest

sense as oblivion – as in medieval christendom’s image of Christ’s “Harrowing of Hell” while in the tomb. Tellingly, the medieval Church abandoned baptism by total immersion, with its obscure symbolism of ritual death, and instead took to sprinkling infants – a rite which in the popular imagination took on the character of an exorcism.

A case can be made for the meaningful death of Jesus. John the Evangelist and John of Patmos both identify him with the Passover lamb (*John* 1:29, 19:36; *Revelations* 5:6, 9). Since that lamb was slain in place of the first-born of Israel, Jesus’s death could be seen as redemptive for the “first-born” of the “New” Israel. But such a sacrificial victim would have to have been without blemish, and this presupposes a sinless intimacy with God which has not pertained (with the possible exception of the assumed Enoch and Elijah) between man and God since Eden. John the Evangelist puts words into the mouth of Jesus which promote the idea of a complete unity of wills (at the least) between God and His “Son”, but the christological tangles which these speeches have given rise to bear witness to the difficulties involved: such a man would indeed have to be of a different order of reality to be a fit sacrifice “without blemish”, and participation through any rite in the death of such a victim leads again inevitably into magic.

What, then, is the meaning of baptism if not participation in the death of a perfect sacrificial victim? Undoubtedly, the ritual of John the Baptiser was modelled on the cleansing of Naaman the Syrian, a leper and a gentile (2 *Kings* 5:1-14). In the manner of Elisha, John was offering a ritual cleansing to Jews who lived in gentile territories and who wished to

enter the Holy Land via the Jordan (thereby avoiding Samaria) in order to be in a fit state to render their dues at the Jerusalem Temple. The equivalent survives in the *mikveh* (ritual bath) of *giyyur* – conversion to Judaism. This *does* make sense symbolically: the proselyte is re-born into a new, Jewish, identity – just as a Jewish baby is born through the waters of its Jewish mother’s womb.

The earliest Christians were not entirely blameworthy for straying into their errors of interpretation. They fell victim to a fundamentalist kabbalistic theology which saw ritual impurity as demon-possession and the ingestion of non-*kosher* food as poisoning. This coloured their interpretation of the Fall and its consequences. A possible alternative view, which saw the body of a Jew as a microcosm of the Temple, did not gain purchase in the development of the mythos of Jesus (although see *John* 2:21). So the Christian narrative is trapped in the semi-magical obscurantism of a Moses Nachmanides. (And we should not forget that the legacy of this theology persisted in Christendom until modern times: the monarch who sanctioned the “authorized” version of the English Bible of 1611 also wrote a “Demonology”.) Jesus’s aim was to establish a compassionate and therefore inclusive Judaism in which holiness and wholesomeness are the watchwords for all looking towards a restored Eden in the midst of which will be the Tree of Life.

* * *

If Jesus, in his healing acts, severed the perceived connection between physical circumstances and divine rewards and punishments, who, then, are the

“blessed”? According to Jesus, only God knows. The elect are like seed which is scattered on different soils (the parable being misinterpreted by the Gospel-writers). God will gather his own to himself in due course of time. But according to the Petrines Jesus did not declare ritual uncleanness as being of no account. They depicted a Messiah who cured by his divine power the unclean afflictions caused by sin, or expelled demons of uncleanness, thus demonstrating a power over nature and supernature. (Although a vestige of the true activity of Jesus in declaring the unclean as accepted by God and not afflicted by the consequences of sin is preserved in the picture of “faithful” people as the victims of a random demonic possession.) They took over the cleansing ritual of John the Baptist, and turned it into a ritual re-enactment on the part of the believer of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The concept of a holy spirit was developed as a means of retaining an apostolic monopoly over the supernatural power of Jesus.

The focus of this newly-gathered Israel was to be the Herodian Temple, “cleansed” by Jesus and his followers in preparation for the Jubilee of the 49th (ie. the 7 X 7th) anniversary of its founding. It was this “messianic” action – the making ready of the outer courts for those apparently “cursed” with uncleanness by Yahweh – which ultimately sealed his fate with the Jewish establishment.

The continuing ritual uncleanness of the Temple itself, and its destruction by the Romans, meant that the Petrines could subsequently claim that the death of Jesus was the fulfilment of the atonement sacrifice of *Yom Kippur*. This claim could not be applied so effectively to the Passover sacrifice, since the

celebration of this took place in the home – although Christians could appropriate the slaughter of the paschal lamb in the Temple. Because of this, the idea of the atoning death of Jesus took on a greater significance, allowing Jewish Christians like Peter to theologise the national disaster that had overtaken them.

The idea of substitution in both the atonement and Passover sacrifices – for Israel in the former, for the first-born of the Israelites in the latter – had to be extended to all humanity and not just the Jews as the Petrites faced rejection in the synagogues and increased acceptance by Gentiles. Hence, in later Petrine theology, the sin of Adam (that is, all men in the person of their common ancestor) was atoned-for by the death of a second Adam: Jesus. This theology did raise the difficulty of “inherited” sin. The suggestion by Augustine of Hippo was that this was passed on by the concupiscence inherent in the reproductive act. But it was dealt by the cleansing ritual of baptism. What was not dealt with was the alleged punishment for sin – affliction which the “sinner” did not appear to bring down upon themselves, such as birth defects – which continued to pertain after baptism. The lifting of the Petrine god’s “punishments” have to be deferred to the arrival of a new heaven and a new earth. In the same way the reward of the martyrs to the “true faith” had to be similarly deferred, as depicted in the Apocalypse of John of Patmos. In this theology, the alleged supernatural miracles of Jesus were the foretaste of this new deal at the end of the era of sin.

But once we accept that the miracles of Jesus were invented by the Petrites, then Jesus may be seen as

declaring that worldly afflictions are not a punishment for sin. But what about the sin of Adam and its consequent curse as depicted in the "Old Testament"? The fact that the myth had gained wide currency because of the Hellenistic Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, the so-called "Septuagint", put pressure on the Gnostics, the true spiritual heirs of Jesus, to present their own interpretation. In this alternative exegesis, Adam rebels against the primitive demiurge Jehovah ("Ialdabaoth") prompted by the "life" (Zoe/Eve) within him. But Eve herself is also subject to the curse of carnality: she is raped by Ialdabaoth, and the cult of death begins. The blood-sacrifices of her son Abel are favoured by Jehovah, while her other offspring by Ialdabaoth, Cain, becomes a murderer. Nevertheless, "life" (that is, the "eternal life" of Gnosis) is carried on by the true offspring of Adam and Eve: Seth. This striving towards an alternative interpretation of an essentially alien scripture, thrust upon Gnostics by the prevalence of the Septuagint, can be seen in the documents of Nag Hammadi - a late and incomplete attempt made before the true religion was forcibly overwhelmed by "orthodoxy", and holy war was perpetrated by the Petrine, the heirs of the Pharisees.

* * *

The recovery of the authentic teaching of Jesus is necessary because of a process which has obscured it. The results of this process, knowledge of which forms the basis of any filter, are (a) attempts by the adherents of the parent-religion to re-assimilate a radical re-interpretation, and (b) attempts by followers of a charismatic figure to consolidate their own position by the legitimisation of revelation by alleged supernatural

occurrences attested only by partisan witnesses. The legitimisation of religious authority by an alleged suspension of natural laws, and the reporting of events in the life of a religious leader which supposedly fulfil prophecy, further strengthen the authority of these followers. This process, whether seen as gullibility or fraudulence, is an inevitable entropic development in religion which leads to the material support of professional intermediaries between the divine and the human.

Even if the wheat among the tares, the salt in the earth, the leaven in the dough and the best of the catch were able to form themselves into some kind of caucus, they could lay no claim upon the service of others - nor, indeed, is there anything they would desire from them in this world. Because the material world is irredeemable, there is no point in forming an organisation which promotes the "cause" of faith in redemption. And because God does not act in the world as Saviour, there can be no scripture, no ritual sacrifice, and no priesthood. There is no providence, no prayer, and no "God". The only sacrifice is that of The Spiritual, who suffer in their own flesh the consequences of their knowledge of the designs of The Powers and therefore the hostility of The Powers towards them.

CONCERNING THE PROLOGUE TO JOHN

Words *about* Jesus must always be secondary to the words *of* Jesus. And Jesus's fundamental tenet is this: that those of The Light, who are the good and the just, will be saved for a reward that transcends mortality, and that those of the darkness, the wicked and the unjust, will be destroyed in an everlasting annihilation, and mortal man cannot pre-empt that judgment. But how do we know these fundamental truths to be "true"? – The Prologue to John's Gospel implies a doctrine of emanations which allows for a description of how The Supreme Being relates to the material world (the spiritual and the material realms being different in kind), and how The Truth may be apprehended.

The Prologue continues in the present age to be seen through the refracting lens of Christian Trinitarian doctrine, with "the Word" consistently capitalised and personalised by the masculine pronoun to denote a pre-existent second person of the "Trinity", or "God the Son". This typographical manipulation has been applied in all modern English translations subsequent to Tyndale. But behind this Prologue there is, I believe, an account of the meaning and nature of the prophet Jesus in which a doctrine of emanations is implied as a valid way of illuminating the relationship of The Supreme Being to the world. I have therefore composed a paraphrase of the opening to John's Gospel which spells out what I believe the Evangelist, unaware of how his message would be later distorted by Christendom, intended to say

"In the beginning" was the word, and the word was with The Supreme Being, and the word was: "God". The same was in the beginning with The Supreme Being. All things were made by means of it, and without its means was not anything made that was made. In it was life, and life was the light of everyman. Meanwhile, The Light (of Truth) shines on in the darkness – the darkness did not overwhelm it. There was a man sent from "God" whose name was "John". The same came for a witness, to bear witness to The Light, so that everyman might have the opportunity through John of apprehending it. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness to that Light – The True Light which can illumine each man who comes into "the world" from beyond it. It was in "the world", and "the world" became an entity because of it, for "the world" did not know it. It came to its own, who, being illumined already, did not "receive" it; rather those who "received" it were in fact empowered as progeny of The Supreme Being, the ones who apprehended the true nature of "God", who were born not by the blood of circumcision or the urges of the flesh, or by any ordinance of man, but directly from The Supreme Being. Meanwhile, the word was made flesh in both words and deeds, and dwelt among us, and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only one actually begotten by "God" as "Father", overflowing with selflessness and truth. John bore witness of it, and cried, saying, "This is the one of which I spoke, 'That which comes after me has priority over me, for it was before me.' And of its fullness has everyman received, generosity upon generosity. For the Law was given through Moses, but selfless-giving-itself and truth-itself became apparent through Jesus The Chosen One. No man has seen "God" at any time, but the only one actually begotten like a son (The Truth) who has complete access to the true nature of his father, that has shown "God" forth.

There is a narrative implied in the Prologue. Taking into account the wisdom literature of the Bible such as *Proverbs*, we find that there are two principal emanations from the Supreme Being: Wisdom, and The Word. Both of these (in mythological terms) are implicated in Matter through the process of creation. A higher emanation is Truth – the “Light” of John’s Gospel (see *Psalms* 36:9) – which is of and remains of the spiritual realm after the creation, unsullied by Matter. If Mary the mother of Jesus is a manifestation of Wisdom (her *Magnificat* in *Luke* being the ultimate expression of *Job* 28:28), and Jesus himself is The Word apparent in flesh, then the teaching of Jesus is Truth revealed as Word (or words). Whereas Wisdom and The Word are created – there was a time when they were not – The Light of Truth is uncreated. After the coming-into-being of Matter, Light is commanded go into the world, where it remains uncontaminated by the Material. The Light made manifest in the teaching of the Word-made-flesh (not forgetting it is part of John’s thesis that The Word reveals itself by the deeds of Jesus, as well as by his words) is recognised and apprehended by the branches of the vine and none other (*John* 17:3). Jesus’s death is a Passover sacrifice that beckons the knowers of Truth back to The Light (*John* 18:37). It is this scheme of things which is explicated by John’s Prologue, which is in effect a *midrash* on the opening of *Genesis*. The Light of Truth is in fact the “spirit of God” which moved over the face of the waters of chaos at the beginning of all things.

CONCERNING THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

Man has The Divine within him. Spiritual Truth is located within the deeper recesses of the mind rather than on the shallow surface of consciousness. It manifests itself as story or tableau the meaning of which is not always easy to articulate in rational terms. Indeed, such Truth may be altered and so distorted by “worldly” considerations such as the material needs of a professional priesthood, the maintenance and upkeep of buildings, and the requirement of hierarchies to be seen to be historically consistent in their utterances. But the spring cannot be dammed: the underground stream of stories, images and symbols – dreams dreamed, remembered and re-incarnated in word, paint or stone – will continue to gush forth.

One such manifestation is the *Apocalypse* of John of Patmos. Unsurprisingly, visions here of the end-time are reflections of dreams of the beginnings. In both, the number seven is key as the time-sequence of the primal story, and light is the symbol by which all other symbols are seen. And yet, as if to emphasise the fact that Truth is not located in sequential order and rational lucidity, the *Apocalypse* constantly subverts sequence and reason in its presentation of material: the orderly and light-filled procession of the story of creation has become a nightmarish jumble, a reflection of the creation-story seen in a glass darkly – as darkened by sin and as rendered a counterfeit of God’s intended order.

In the beginning Wisdom (Sophia) proceeded from God and created matter, energy and time (*Proverbs* 3:19-20, 8:22-31). Matter had rudimentary structure and time existed as sequence, but neither was

purposeful. It was only when God spoke His Word that the order of the days of creation commenced. The Alpha of that Word was Light. Light was the prime creation. This "Light" was not the light we see: rather, it was The Light by which we see light (*Psalms* 36:9). The light we see came into being when the light-emitting bodies were formed on the fourth day (*Genesis* 1:14). Rather, the first Light was (and is) spiritual consciousness, The Gnosis which ordered Sophia's creation and which is conscious both of itself and of its Creator.

This Light brings about Eternal Life (*John* 1:4; *1 John* 1:5). It has been manifested in these latter days in and through Jesus of Nazareth, and in the 144,000 Gnostics of spiritual Israel (*Revelation* 22:13). Once this Light was shed upon matter and time, the various forms of creation could arise in a hierarchy during the six "days" of the issuing-forth of the universe. When that process was completed, the created order could function independently of its Creator, and God could, on the seventh day, "rest". The Fall initiated the reverse process, one of entropy and occlusion, culminating in the final Omega of the word of destruction, when the light emitted will be the glare of the lake of fire.

Adam and Eve were able to eat all the trees of the Garden that were available for their food, except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These trees included the Tree of Life, conferring immortality. But as result of their disobedience, God passed a sentence of death. The pair did not die immediately: the sentence took the form of an exclusion from the Tree of Life. Adam then went on to live 930 years reckoned in mortal time. If Adam was 70 years old – a mature man

- when he ate the fruit, he was in fact alive for 1000 years. All of Adam's children now pass into oblivion until the second coming of Christ. The perfect obedience of Jesus - after Adam, a second son of God - earned him the immortality denied to Adam.

God allowed the Fall to happen. He did not intervene. He was "resting" for a "day". During this time Satan and the wicked angels were active on earth (*Genesis* 3:1, 6:1-4; *Revelation* 12:1). The period of "rest" ended with the death of Adam after 1000 years. God then brought about the destruction of the Flood, which removed from the earth the evil which had been brought about by the wicked angels without destroying the Gnostic remnant of Noah and his family (*Revelation* 12:15-16). The millennial rule of Christ may be seen as another period of "rest" during which the wicked angels are not this time allowed to take control of the earth: Satan is bound during the restorative reign of the second Adam.

During the lifetime of Adam all the patriarchs up to the time of Noah were born. Noah was 14 years old when Adam died. Once Adam had died and God's period of "rest" was over, the Almighty began His salvage operation. It began with the olive-branch brought back by the dove after the Flood (*Genesis* 8:11), and will end with the Great White Throne Judgment (*Revelation* 20:11-18). The earth is and will be renewed over seven periods of time, each characterised as seven months - the final period being a grand jubilee (*Deuteronomy* 15:1). During six periods of seven months (mentioned in *Revelation* as 42 months or 1260 days), God's judgment on the earth takes the form of the disastrous consequences of the Fall on the natural order.

During the seventh period of seven months there is first a "silence" in heaven (*Revelation* 8:1): God "rests" completely for "half an hour". This is the time of Armageddon and the Great Tribulation when Satan and the wicked angels once again briefly seek to gain the upper hand. The millennium then begins: a period of a thousand years during which the earth is ruled by a righteous regent as it should have been during the thousand years of Adam's lifetime. God is able to rest easy in the knowledge that His Son has things in hand. Finally, the last gasp of the forces of evil and those who choose to follow them into disobedience initiates the final judgment when they are consigned once and for all to the lake of fire.

Thus in the *Apocalypse* the 42 months of God's judgment on the natural order of creation is spoken of as 1260 days and 3½ years: 6 times 7 months. After the half-hour complete "rest" of God His Sabbath continues with Jesus the human son of God, the second Adam, ruling on behalf of his Father for 1000 years. Thus the 49 months of post-lapsarian creation is completed: the Great White Throne Judgment concludes a period of 7000 years from the death of Adam and the Flood, itself 7000 years after the creation of The Light of Gnosis. Creation is re-run and the world is renewed.

The six periods of sin-induced catastrophe on the earth are however punctuated by six covenants which are part of God's salvage-operation: through Noah, through Abraham, through Moses, through Joshua, through David, and through Jesus. Each covenant is an agreement by means of which a faithful remnant is defined by its commitment to Higher Truth and sets itself apart from the world, so that it may not only be

spared the second death in the lake of fire, but be readmitted to Paradise and access to the Tree of Life (*Revelation* 20:11-15). In each case in the Biblical account the spiritual movement towards God is symbolised by a geographical movement, and each covenant is sealed by the blood of sacrifice.

The remnant saved by the “old” covenant is symbolised in *Revelation* by the 144,000; those saved by the “new” covenant in Jesus (who offers himself as a new Passover lamb and by so doing reveals his understanding of God’s plan, and is therefore alone worthy to open the seals hiding the scroll of history) is represented by the “great crowd” (*Revelation* 7:9). Both are symbolised by the 24 elders seen in the tableau beyond the door opened onto heaven for John. The “old” covenants are typified by physical movement from an old geographical place to a new one: to Ararat, Haran, Sinai, Gilgal and Jerusalem. The “new” covenant is symbolised by Jesus’ physical passing into heaven itself at the Ascension.

The new Exodus began in fact with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Thus the “great crowd” carrying their palms (*Revelation* 7:9) are compared implicitly to the throng who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah and hailed him as he embarked on the series of events which will saw him impaled by the false religion of Babylon (*Revelation* 7:4-10, 14:1). The New Jerusalem is founded on both the “old” and the “new” covenants (*Revelation* 21:12-14): Gnostics of all ages are able to recognise that higher Truth and imperative which inevitably leads to martyrdom at the hand of those religious Powers-that-Be which, though unmasked, have a Protean ability to form new images of themselves to worship (*Revelation* 13:13).

The Spiritual Israel of Gnosis is symbolised in *Revelation* by the 12 stars crowning creation's progenitrix Sophia (*Revelation* 12:1) – the faithful remnant of the “old” covenant – and by her child who, withdrawn from the world of carnality, is the ever-growing great crowd of adherents to the “new” covenant. The child's fare is Scripture truly understood. The two witnesses – the Old and New Testaments – were suppressed by a corrupt religion during the Constantinian apostasy (*Revelation* 11). No human institution can be an infallible depository of Truth; all religions are corrupted by carnal considerations. The Gnostic must find the lamp-stand of True Light and the olive tree of its sustenance wherever it is to be found.

Faith, as in the case of Abraham, is superior to obedience to the Law as long as the promise of immortality is yet unfulfilled. While access to the Commandments was through the procreative line of Israel, faith involved a renunciation of all rights proceeding from membership of that procreative line – as in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and his faith in an implied promise of resurrection. The New Israel of the 144,000 sealed in *Revelation* are virgins undefiled by women. That is, they have renounced salvation by means of the procreative line. It is these who will reign with Christ on earth for 1000 years – that is, for a time equivalent to the original life-span of Adam, thereby putting right his flawed dominion.

During Jesus' millennial rule on earth, a “great crowd” of survivors of Armageddon and of the resurrected who were unable during their natural lifespan to access the proclaimed Gospel will be able to choose the “everlasting gospel” of obedience to God in

circumstances where Satan is bound and Paradise restored on earth. The 144,000 co-regents will intercede as priests for their resurrected ancestors. The Danites, however, are excluded from the spiritual Israel (*Judges* 17:1-18:31). Their sin against the Holy Spirit was to use religion as a justification for evil. They will be resurrected at the end of the millennium, judged, then consigned to everlasting torment in the lake of fire – a diabolical immortality.

The scroll of the six days of creation is open for all to see in the Book of Genesis. The basis for God's salvage-operation is also available for all to see in the Law. The scroll of the six "days" of destruction is open in the Apocalypse of John. During the seventh "day" of a thousand years God will "rest" from the destruction and Satan will be bound so that the "everlasting gospel" can be seen, unobscured by the forces of evil (*Revelation* 14:6-7, *Romans* 1:19-22). In the final consummation, the scroll of creation upon which God's Word has been written will be rolled up, and all will begin anew. The Light of Gnosis, God's first creation, will once again illumine nature, and those passing the final test will be given access to the Tree of Life.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS

A PARAPHRASE RENDERING

*Jesus took Judas Thomas aside with him to a lonely place,
and said to him,*

"Simon hath called me a righteous messenger. John hath compared me to a wise philosopher. But thou, Judas Thomas, hast declared that thy lips are unable to say who I am. Because of this, Thomas, I am no longer thy master. Thou hast drunk, become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have opened. I am therefore entrusting thee with many sayings.

This is the true fast: to abstain from the world. This is the true Sabbath: not to do the works of the world. This is what truly pleases the Father of All.

I have taken my stand in the midst of the world, and in the flesh I have appeared unto those that dwell therein. I have found them all drunk, yet none of them are thirsty.

My soul has ached for the sons of men, for the blindness of their hearts depriveth them of sight.

They came into the world in emptiness, and they desire nothing else but to depart from it empty. Meanwhile, they are replete with drink. When their drunkenness passeth out of them, then they will be sorry.

When flesh cometh into being because of spirit, it is a wonder, but if spirit came into being because of the flesh, that would be a wonder too far. And yet we

should marvel how such wealth of spirit hath come to dwell in such poverty as the flesh.

Where three are gathered, the Father is there. Even when there be only two, or even one alone, the lack shall be made up.

A city on a hill and fortified may be secure from its enemy, but neither can it be hidden from him.

When thou art as careless of thine appearance as a child, and thou layest down thy cloak before the one who cometh, then thou shalt see the Son of the Living One coming, and shalt have no fear.

Often thou desiredst to hear the truth, and there was no-one to tell it. There will be a time when thou shalt long again to hear it; then thou shalt cherish my words.

Any vine not rooted in the Father is weak; it will be pulled up, and perish.

Become an exodus.

Ye ask by what authority I speak these things, because what I say is not enough for you. In this way, ye imitate the Jews, for they either love the tree and hate its fruit, or love the fruit and hate the tree.

Whoever denieth the Father shall be forgiven, as will anyone who denieth the Son. But whoever denieth the Holy Spirit within them cannot be forgiven, on earth or in heaven.

A man cannot ride two horses or bend two bows. But if two families make common cause and join themselves into a single house, they may say to a mountain, 'Move thyself from here,' and it will indeed move.

Blessed are the lonely, for they are the chosen. They shall find union with the Kingdom from which they came, and to which they shall return.

If they say unto you, 'From whence camest thou?' say to them, 'We came from the light, from the place where the light sprang into being by itself, radiated, and enabled you to see.' If they ask, 'Are ye the light?' say, 'We are its children, the chosen offspring of the Living Father.' If they say, 'Give us the proof,' reply, 'Behold by means of us both the radiance and the source.'

Ye ask when ye shall see the Kingdom of Heaven. I tell you: what ye long to see is already among you, and yet ye perceive it not.

Ye tell me that twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of me. But I tell you that, while ye speak of the dead, ye are disregarding the One who liveth.

Ye ask if circumcision be good or not. I tell you: if it were good then circumcision would be passed on at birth from the circumcised father. Value circumcision in spirit which cometh from the Heavenly Father.

Whoever doth not leave behind mother and father, brothers and sisters, is not my disciple. Take up thy pack, therefore, and win my praise.

Whoever recogniseth this world as dead doth not seek the praise of dead men.

Blessed is he who in life sought life. As long as ye are alive, look to the Living One in case ye die, or look to the Living One and are unable to see.

The pilgrim carrieth a lamb with him so that he can kill and eat it when the time of the festival cometh. He eateth it not while it liveth, but only after it hath been slaughtered, for he knoweth that would be forbidden. So also with thee: make not difficulties for thyself, for that will make thee sin.

I disclose my mysteries only to those who are worthy of them, and do not let my left hand know what my right hand doeth.

The one full of knowledge with empty heart: that one is utterly lacking.

If ye bring forth what is within you, what ye have will save you. If ye do not have anything within you, what ye do not have will destroy you.

I shall pull down this house, and no-one else shall rebuild it.

Many stand outside the wedding-chamber, but the doorway is strait, and only the single one entereth.

I am light in this world. I am from the All from which all proceedeth and to which all returneth. Split a piece of wood and my teaching once known in your hearts is there; lift up a stone and there ye will find it.

Whosoever findeth the world discovereth a corpse.
Leave the dead to bury their dead.

Let one who hath abundance of spirit renounce all
power, and so let him rule over all.

The outward person is visible to all, but the inward
light is hidden.

Those who share the light of the Father are at the same
time hidden by it.

Whoever is near me is close to the fire; whoever is far
from me is far from the Kingdom's hearth.

When thou beholdest thine own face, thou art happy.
But bliss might not be thine if thou wert to see thine
eternal visage, not seen with eyes.

Adam came from great power and from great wealth,
but is not equal to you chosen ones. For had he been
worthy, he would not have tasted death as ye shall
not.

How unfortunate the body that dependeth on another
body. How unfortunate the spirit that dependeth on
both.

Messengers come to you and deliver what you need.
But you throw it back at them and say, 'When will you
bring us something worthwhile?'

Ye ask me to tell you what I shall bring about, so that
ye might believe. In this way, ye scrutinise the sky and
examine the horizon for signs of what will come, but

meanwhile ye see not what is here in your presence or perceive what is taking place now.

Seek and ye shall find.

Before the time was ripe, ye asked me and I could not tell you. Now the time is upon us ye no longer ask.

The false Kingdom is like a jar full of meal carried by a woman. While she was walking along a distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her all along the road. She did not realise there had been a mishap. Only when she reached her house did she put down the jar and find it was empty.

The Kingdom of falsehood is like the training undertaken by a man who wanted to kill a person in power. While still at home he drew his sword and thrust it into the mud wall to find out how steady his hand was. But he did hurt to his hand, and so did not go and kill the man.

Ye invite me to pray with you today, and fast. But what is the sin that I have committed and what do I want undone? Fast and pray, rather, when the bridegroom hath left the wedding chamber.

Whoever acknowledgeth his father and mother shall be called the child of a whore.

When two are united, then ye shall be men indeed, and if ye tell a mountain to move it will do so.

Whosoever drinketh from the fountain of my mouth shall become one with me; I shall dwell in him, and my secrets shall be revealed to him.

Let anyone who hath found the world and become wealthy then renounce it.

When the heavens and the earth are rolled up, then whoever dwelleth in the Living One shall not see death.

I say unto you honour shall be given to whoever hath found his true self.

The flesh that followeth the spirit shall suffer dissolution. But mark well: the spirit that followeth the flesh is by no means immortal.

Ye ask when the Kingdom will come. I tell you that it will not come by looking out for it, nor will it avail to say, 'Look, here it is,' or, 'Look, there it is.' Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people seeth it not.

Do not, Simon, tell Marihan to leave us because women are not worthy of life. Shall I then advise her on how to become a 'he', so that she too may become a living spirit like you men? No! – for everyone who seeth neither 'he' nor 'she' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Phillip Medhurst was born in Leicester, England in 1948. Educated at Alderman Newton's Grammar School, he read English at Wadham College, Oxford. After graduation he trained for the Anglican ministry. On ordination he served in a South London parish while qualifying as a schoolteacher at Goldsmiths' College. For two decades he taught religious education in both state-funded and private schools. In 1982 his son was permanently disabled as result of a road traffic accident, and this caused Phillip to radically reassess his religious beliefs. He is now retired and devotes his time entirely to writing and fine art. He is no longer affiliated to any orthodox Christian denomination and lives alone in Kidderminster.

**"No man can come to me unless
he is drawn by the Father who sent me."**

The Gospel according to John, chapter 6 verse 44

**"In very truth, anyone who gives heed to what I say
and puts his trust in him who sent me
has hold of eternal life,
and does not come up for judgement,
but has already passed from death to life."**

The Gospel according to John, chapter 5 verse 24